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HEARD, DOREEN BROWN. A Production of Madge Miller's The Land of the Dragon. (1976)
Directed by: Mr. Thomas Behm. Pp. 143.

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze the script by studying the Chinese classical theatre and the script itself, to produce the play, and to evaluate the production.

Chapter I includes the following: (1) background analysis of the play, including a history of the Chinese classical theatre; (2) stylistic analysis of the play, including a discussion of the adaptation of Chinese classical theatre techniques to a children's play; (3) character descriptions and analyses; (4) analyses of costumes and makeup; (5) a discussion of the function and mood of the set; and (6) justification for the choice of script and interpretation.

Chapter II contains the director's prompt book for the production of The Land of the Dragon, as performed on October 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, and November 1 and 2, on the main stage of Taylor Building at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Types of notations included are: (1) movement, composition, and picturization; (2) stage business; and (3) sound cues. Ground plans and photographs supplement this record.

Chapter III consists of the director's critical evaluation of the finished production. Discussed in this chapter are: (1) achievement of interpretation in the production as compared with the stated goals, (2) actor-director relationships during the rehearsal period, (3) audience reaction to the production, and (4) personal observations by the director.

The appendices include a study guide, a listing of traditional sleeve movements, and a copy of the program.

A PRODUCTION OF MADGE MILLER'S

THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

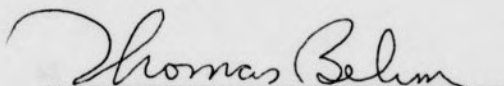
by

Doreen Brown Heard

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Approved by


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APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I
AN INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS OF THE LAND
OF THE DRAGON BY MADGE MILLER

Introduction

A. C. Scott, the noted authority on Chinese drama, has said, "The Chinese classical play is in effect a synthesis of speech, music and dance which are interrelated and each dependent on the other."¹ Verse parts are sung, prose parts recited, and the emotional expression of the scenes is emphasized by the dynamic music and the dance-pantomime style of acting.² Full of fascinating conventions that have survived through hundreds of years to the present day, the Chinese classical theatre provides an engrossing study for the western lover of theatre.

The purpose of Chapter I of this thesis will be to show how the dramatic quality of the Chinese classical theatre can be adapted to a production of the play for children, The Land of the Dragon, by Madge Miller. A brief historical background of the Chinese classical theatre will be related, with a discussion of the style of presentation most practical for a children's play. Characters in the play will be analyzed as to their function, costuming and makeup; and the setting will be analyzed with relation to function, mood, and adaptation of traditional

¹A. C. Scott, Mei Lan-fang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1959), p. 1.

²Sís Kalvodová and Vaniš Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, trans. Iris Urwin (London: Spring House, 1957), p. 37.

Chinese settings. The director will discuss the choice of this play, and the interpretation to be given it in production.

Background Analysis of the Play

Chinese classical theatre has its roots in antiquity, with ritual dances that were performed at various festivals and celebrations, such as for the arrival of spring, the gathering of the harvest, and the honoring of military accomplishments. As the early feudal nobles began to hold elaborate festivities on their own estates, the music and dance became secular. Kalvodová, in Chinese Theatre, indicates that the simultaneous development of music and dance can be seen in the bas-reliefs of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 221 A.D.), which depict figures of dancers holding musical instruments in their hands.³ From these early years to the present time, dance and music have been integral parts of theatrical presentations.

Emperors and nobles of the Han Dynasty also had court buffoons, who developed simple stories performed by a single actor. In the natural progression of events, the successor to the court buffoon was the clown ts'an-chün, who appeared in the T'ang Dynasty (618 A.D. to 960 A.D.) and usually played satirical scenes. The later introduction of a second clown made dialogue possible, but the scenes were still improvisational and with little plot.⁴

It was during the T'ang period that the Emperor Ming Huang (reign 712-754 A.D.) established the famous "Academy of the Pear Orchard"

³Ibid., p. 26.

⁴Ibid., p. 27.

for training singers and actors to perform at Court. Actors are still sometimes referred to as "Children of the Pear Orchard," and the title "Leader of the Pear Orchard" has been conferred upon outstanding Chinese actors. Ming Huang is considered the "patron" of actors.⁵

Under the T'ang Dynasty, the Empire had expanded far to the west, bringing China into contact with the dramatic art of India and the countries of central Asia. It was from this contact that playlets, which involved dance and music with a short plot, were developed. The plays were divided into four parts, foreshadowing the later division into acts, and used several actors. This type of song and dance drama reached its highest development in the Sung Dynasty (960 to 1280 A.D.), at a time when trade with other countries was expanding rapidly and there was growing economic prosperity. During the Sung Dynasty, real dialogue between two characters appeared in longer dramatized stories.⁶

The Chinese classical theatre began to take on its distinctive characteristics during the Yüan Dynasty, founded in 1280 by the Mongol warrior Kublai Khan. The Mongol hordes conquered all of China and forced Chinese literary men out of public life. In their enforced retirement, these men of letters turned their attention to the folk music and dance drama, writing many plays which ". . . already bore signs of mature drama, with both plot and form well-developed, and marked by great beauty of language."⁷ The plays consisted of a prologue and four

⁵A. C. Scott, The Classical Theatre of China (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 28.

⁶Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 28.

⁷Ibid.

acts, in each of which only one actor sang, while the others spoke. According to Kate Buss in Studies in the Chinese Drama, the greatest contribution of the thirteenth century drama was ". . . that divisions of subject and character were fixed and an enduring literature produced."⁸

During the Yüan Dynasty drama became divided into two schools, Northern and Southern, each of which contained many variations. The basic characteristics of each school are important influences in tracing the history of Chinese classical theatre. The most important difference in the Northern and Southern styles was in the construction of the plays; the music, dialogue and procedure differed from region to region. The Southern style paid strict attention to rules of prosody and the length of its measures, and used more literary expressions. The Northern style used everyday speech, and was not concerned with adherence to rules.

There were musical differences too: the Southern school made use of a five note scale with no semitones, while the Northern school had a seven note scale using two semitones. Stringed instruments accompanied the singing in the North, but the Southern style used the flute as the chief instrument, with strings in a secondary capacity. The songs of the Northern school were lively and vigorous, while the Southern songs were gentler in feeling and melody.⁹

At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644), the center of the Chinese drama moved to southern China, and there developed into a revised form. This new form was a synthesis of the drama of the Yüan

⁸Kate Buss, Studies in the Chinese Drama (Boston: Four Seas Co., 1922), p. 19.

⁹Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, pp. 29-31.

Dynasty and various folk operas. A prolific poet and scholar of the Ming period, Liang Po-lung, collaborated with a highly skilled musician and composer, Wei Liang-fu, to write plays which influenced all the other schools of drama. Thus, the foundations were laid for a new lyric style of opera called K'un-ch'ü, which continued until the nineteenth century, when it was superseded by the famous Peking Opera. In whole or in part, the K'un-ch'ü operas still influence the Chinese classical theatre. In acting, movement, dance, costume, makeup, and music, the theatre of the Ming Dynasty took on the form it still bears today.¹⁰

Peking Opera, or ching hsi, the classical theatre style which evolved about the middle of the nineteenth century during the Manchu Dynasty (1644 to 1911), was a fusion of several regional types of drama. Old historical themes and other traditional stories were adapted into more modern dramas with music that was adapted from simple folk melodies. The aim obviously was to entertain the ordinary citizens rather than the literati.¹¹ However "modernized" the Peking Opera was, the old traditions and conventions were retained. The music, diction, singing, miming, gestures, gait, dance, acrobatics, costumes, and makeup were all codified, fixed by age-old tradition.¹²

A. C. Scott, in The Classical Theatre of China, states:

A Chinese play aims at a harmony of effect which is attained by a strict formality applied rigorously to every aspect of the actor's performance. Song, speech, movement, costume and makeup, as well

¹⁰Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 30.

¹¹A. C. Scott, Traditional Chinese Plays, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967-69), 1:4-5.

¹²Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 30.

as the musical accompaniment, are alike bound by this formality. Ideally, not one of these may be sacrificed in the interests of the others.¹³

The audience, aware of theatrical traditions, expects all the various facets of the performance to adhere strictly to these traditions, and deviations from the visual pattern, either in the physical appearance of the actor, movement, costume, or ensemble, are considered imperfections. The actor is the most important element in the Chinese classical theatre, and the audience is accustomed to seeing ancient and familiar stories used as vehicles to display the talents of favorite actors.¹⁴

The Peking drama flourished from its beginning, receiving both royal patronage and the support of the common people. It has continued to the present day, undergoing various developments and some aberrations in recent years, attributable to declining standards of appreciation in audiences becoming used to newer and more realistic forms of entertainment. In spite of this, it still enjoys great popularity.¹⁵

Stylistic Analysis

The Land of the Dragon, written by an American, Madge Miller, and first presented in 1945 at the Children's Theatre of Pittsburgh, is not an authentic Chinese play. There is no pretension of authenticity, but rather the play makes skillful and comic use of the outward conventions of the Chinese classical theatre. The story of the play is original, but the basic plot follows the style of traditional Chinese

¹³Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, p. 16.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 16-17.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 15.

tales, and could well have been lifted intact from the ancient lore. The characters are appropriately stylized, and the dialogue rhythmic with oriental imagery.¹⁶

Every effort will be made in this production to give the child audience an experience closely approximating authentic Chinese classical theatre. In adapting classical styles and conventions to children's theatre, it is necessary to greatly simplify the original. Chinese acting, with much of the dialogue sung in a manner strange to western ears, and with a stylized gesture for almost every thought, would be much too complicated for children to comprehend. Therefore, the stage movement in The Land of the Dragon must be basically that of the contemporary American stage. Within this limitation, however, the acting can be stylized to give an impression of authenticity. The generous use of mime, so important in the Chinese theatre, will add immeasurably to the total effect. The use of fans, limited use of traditional sleeve and arm movements, and occasional posturing will help to create a feeling of authenticity.

Short, quick steps for characters such as Jade Pure, the three Cousins, and Precious Harp, will give an immediate feeling of the oriental. Such short, rolling steps are used in the Chinese classical theatre to simulate the bound feet that women formerly had in China. Road Wanderer and Twenty-Fourth Cousin will be more effective in presenting a masculine image by the use of a Western style of walk, and Covet Spring must have a comic gait, which will be determined as his character develops in rehearsal.

¹⁶William B. Birner, comp., Twenty Plays for Young People (Anchorage, Ky.: Anchorage Press, 1967), p. xii.

There are many opportunities for comedy in The Land of the Dragon, and situations involving the three Cousins and Precious Harp and Covet Spring will be pointed up with broad gestures and much movement. Interplay between the three Cousins can be developed into very funny situations, and the scenes with the various dragons will be especially appealing to the children. Audience attention will be no problem in these lively scenes, but others, particularly the quiet scenes between Jade Pure and Road Wanderer, will need to have sufficient movement to hold attention. Since comedy is derived from incongruities and deviations from the norm, much of the comedic effect in this play must be derived from Western norms rather than Chinese. Purely Chinese humor might not be recognized by American children.

Dialogue in The Land of the Dragon has been stylized by the author to give an oriental "feel" to the speech. At times, it is almost poetical. This lyricism will require a very clear interpretation by the actors, with good projection and enunciation. Otherwise, the audience may miss essential points.

In maintaining an overall unity and forward movement in this multi-scene production, the character of the Stage Manager plays an important part. The scenes will be consecutive, with no complete blackout and the slight set changes accomplished in full view of the audience. The continuity provided by the Stage Manager's appearance between scenes, and his explanations of the settings, will help to meld the many short scenes into a unified whole.

The Chinese classical theatre makes much use of dance, and the entire production is accompanied by a small orchestra composed primarily

of percussion and string instruments. This music accentuates the action, pointing up various words, gestures, and moves with its emphasis. In The Land of the Dragon, there is no opportunity for dance, the nearest thing being the flowing movements of the female characters.

It would be unwise in a children's play such as this to use a constant musical background, as it would prove distracting. However, Chinese music could be used to good effect preceding the first and second acts, and at the end of the play. Care must be taken in the choice of this music, however, because authentic Chinese music may prove incomprehensible to an American child audience.

The sleeves of the Chinese actor's costume are a very traditional part of his acting, and for each mood and expression there is a symbolic use of the sleeves. Years are required in training before the classical actor masters the subtleties of the famous shui hsiu, "water sleeves." Actually an extension beyond the normal sleeve length, the "water sleeves" are traditional in many, but not all, roles. Sleeve movements were an important feature of dancing technique in ancient China, and were considered essential to the grace of the performer. They were performed in time with the rhythm of the music.¹⁷

Many of the gestures are too complicated and stylized to be used in a children's play, but certain traditional movements would contribute to the oriental effect. The "greeting sleeves," showing respect to the person greeted, could be used many times throughout the play by various characters. This movement is performed by placing the left hand on the

¹⁷Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, p. 96.

right side of the waist and putting the right hand on it. At the same time the actor makes a graceful bow. The "repulsing sleeve," used when an actor repudiates another, could be utilized: the actor makes a circular wrist movement and throws the sleeve abruptly in the direction of the other person; he glares at his foe angrily, and then turns his head away, indicating that he wants nothing to do with him. Another sleeve gesture that could be used is the "weeping sleeve," in which the actor holds the upper corner of the left sleeve with the fingers of his right hand and raises it so close to his eyes that it seems as if he were wiping away tears with it.¹⁸

Particularly important in Chinese acting is the expressive use of the hands. The gestures are symbolic, having been formed by centuries of tradition. Several of these gestures are adaptable for use in The Land of the Dragon, such as the expression of helplessness: both hands are raised and the palms turned upward with a quick circular wrist movement; the hands are left hanging limply from the wrist, and the head is shaken at the same time. Another usable hand movement is the "yielding hand," which indicates regret or disappointment, or compulsion to reach a decision. This gesture involves lifting the right hand to the level of the face, palm outward in a defensive position, while the left hand rests palm upward at the waist. The right hand then moves down in front, while the left moves upward. When the circle is complete, the back of the right hand descends sharply into the left palm, and the right foot gives a slight stamp at the same time.¹⁹

¹⁸Cecilia S. L. Zung, Secrets of the Chinese Drama (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), pp. 81-87.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 99-101.

Certain symbolic actions are peculiarly part of the Chinese actor's technique. One of the most interesting of these is the traditional way of "riding a horse" on stage. The actor carries a ma-pien, or riding whip, which indicates to the audience that he is on horseback or leading his horse, depending upon the position of the whip. The whip is stylized with four evenly spaced tufts representing the color of the horse. The different whip positions and accompanying pantomime indicate whether the rider is mounting, riding or dismounting.²⁰ This convention will be effectively used at the end of The Land of the Dragon in the scene where Precious Harp, Covet Spring, and the Cousins are on horseback and pursuing Jade Pure and Road Wanderer.

Other conventions, such as stepping high to indicate a threshold--Chinese thresholds are made high to keep out evil spirits--will also be incorporated into the play. The traditional pantomime of opening doors and windows, by unbolting and pushing them open, will be used. Reversing the actions results in closing.²¹

It will be necessary for the director to impart to the actors an essential feeling of Chinese classical theatre, in order for them to fully appreciate the style of production, and thereby be able to transmit the charm and essence of this type of theatre to the child audience. The actors must know a brief history of the classical theatre, with particular reference to the traditional gestures and movements. The director will prepare mimeographed pages detailing this information to be given to each

²⁰Ibid., pp. 139-141.

²¹Ibid., pp. 136-137.

actor. These sheets will provide a ready reference for practice of the use of "water sleeves" and other gestures that will be incorporated into the action, as well as providing the necessary background information. By preparing this material, long explanations by the director during rehearsals will be avoided, and the time used more profitably.

Chinese acting is essentially theatrical in style, without much depth of characterization. This theatricality must be preserved in The Land of the Dragon, while at the same time the performance must be comprehensible to the modern child audience. The elements of traditional Chinese theatre that are used must be chosen carefully for their effect. It is not necessary that all sleeve or hand movements be understood by the audience, but rather that the total effect of the play be one of authenticity.

Character Description and Analysis

In order to understand the characters and their functions in The Land of the Dragon, a brief synopsis of the plot is necessary. The action takes place many years ago when China was still ruled by emperors, and tells the story of the lovely princess Jade Pure, who is almost a prisoner of her scheming aunt, Precious Harp, and the chancellor, Covet Spring. Jade Pure must marry by her eighteenth birthday or Precious Harp will become empress, and it is the aunt's intention to prevent a marriage at all costs. Three comic cousins of Jade Pure complicate the plot with their own confused shenanigans, and provide many amusing scenes. Jade Pure is finally rescued by Road Wanderer, a student with the special gift of talking to animals, who has been passing through the country with

largely supplanted.²³ In The Land of the Dragon all female roles will, of course, be played by actresses.

Jade Pure falls into the category of kuei-men-tan, the young unmarried girl. In the book The Classical Theatre of China, A. C. Scott states that the kuei-men-tan ". . . is attractive and graceful but with some of the demureness of the ching-i, whose style of singing she follows."²⁴ Ching-i roles are those of the faithful wife, filial daughter, or lover in distress, and are leading roles. The ching-i is delicate and refined in movement, and makes much use of the "water sleeves."²⁵

The kuei-men-tan is not generally a leading role, but in The Land of the Dragon modern adaptation makes it one. Jade Pure must be played by an actress capable of projecting the demureness of the kuei-men-tan, but simultaneously revealing the strength to maintain a leading role. Her voice must be pleasant and enunciation exceptionally clear in order for the audience to understand the lyrical dialogue. Of all the characters Jade Pure will make the most use of the "water sleeves," with such traditional movements as the "resting," "weeping," "greeting," and "turning" sleeves.

The closest classical counterpart for the aunt's role, Precious Harp, is the ts'ai-tan. The ts'ai-tan combines the qualities of being comic, lowly, and bad natured; and the character of Precious Harp, though not lowly, could have been derived from this source. The ts'ai-tan was frequently good looking in earlier times, but during the years that

²³Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, pp. 68-70.

²⁴Ibid., p. 74.

²⁵Scott, Mei Lan-fang, p. 4.

these roles were often played by ch'ou actors, the quality of physical attractiveness was ignored.²⁶ As a character, Precious Harp provides the antagonist for the play, and should be played forcefully, but comically. Her arrogance must be stressed, but basically she is a comic character and the audience must enjoy her as such, while not sympathizing with her evil intentions.

The three cousins, Twenty-First Cousin, Twenty-Second Cousin, and Twenty-Third Cousin, are definitely ch'ou-tan, comic women's roles. They provide much comedy through synchronized movement and by-play. Again, there is no depth to the roles; they are simply surface characters. Variety will be given to these roles by having each Cousin develop individuality in voice and personality.

In like manner, the men's straight roles in the Chinese classical theatre are divided into distinct types, including such types as the elderly respected man, the young warrior, and the old warrior. Road Wanderer, as the hero, is a hsiao-sheng, or, more specifically, a ch'lung-sheng, a handsome young lover and scholar. Traditionally, he should walk "with a light but dignified tread."²⁷

The hsiao-sheng are always young men, who never wear beards. There are three principal types: shan-tzu-sheng, a young man of good family noted for his use of the fan; chih-wei-sheng, a young warrior or prince, who wears long pheasant feathers in his headdress; and the ch'lung-sheng, a poor scholar or young man in distress. The hsiao-sheng was a very important role in the K'un-chü theatre, but it is a limited

²⁶Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, p. 74.

²⁷Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 18.

and difficult role in the ching-hsi, or Peking stage. The technique requires the vigor of male roles and the gentleness of female roles, and uses similar movements and gestures to the tan actor.²⁸

The character of Road Wanderer will be played "straight," but with a gentleness appropriate to a hsiao-sheng. The dialogue of this character, almost poetical at times, lends itself well to this interpretation. His movements will be graceful and flowing, and various traditional gestures will be used.

The chancellor, Covet Spring, is a character close to wen-ch'ou, a comic actor in a civil play, although he has the age of the lao-sheng, an elderly man. He will be played as a comic, bumbling elderly man, thus differing from the wen-ch'ou, who is usually an acrobatic younger man and a lowly character such as a woodcutter, jailer or watchman. On the other hand, lao-sheng are traditionally respected and Covet Spring is not. He should be played for comedy, and as a foil for Precious Harp. The ch'ou actor's trademark is a white patch of makeup over the nose and around the eyes.

Twenty-Fourth Cousin, who is a simple farmer in the play, has no true counterpart in the Chinese classical theatre. The sheng is the nearest type. He is used for their devious purposes by his sisters, the three Cousins, and does not have much chance to be a distinct personality. He will be played as a simple rustic, to contrast with the more sophisticated palace denizens.

There are also several other roles in The Land of the Dragon which cannot be traced to the classical theatre. Most notable of these

²⁸Scott, The Classical Theatre of China, p. 67.

is the dragon, Small One, which is played by one actor inside an elaborate costume. He cavorts around the stage, alternately roaring and behaving like a pet dog, and undoubtedly is always the favorite character of the children in the audience.

The Property Man, wearing black and therefore "invisible," is a part of the classical theatre, but not as a character. His function is purely practical in the classical theatre, but in The Land of the Dragon he becomes both practical and entertaining. His sleepy characterization creates delightful comedy. Stage assistants in the Chinese theatre perform their tasks quite informally in full view of the audience and remain on stage throughout the play.

Finally, there is the Stage Manager, whose function is to tie the numerous scenes together and verbally set each scene. As a character, he does not exist in the classical Chinese theatre, but it has long been customary for each leading actor to make a speech upon his first entrance, giving information about his character and the play. The Stage Manager could be a modern adaptation of this tradition. Perhaps his origin can be traced to the early Ming Dynasty, when the Southern school of drama began to eclipse the Northern school. At that time the first act of a play commenced with the appearance of a secondary actor called the fu mo, who recited and sang a summary of the play so that the audience would understand the plot. This actor did not take part in the rest of the play.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., p. 31.

Analysis of Costumes and Makeup

The Chinese classical theatre has always been known for its elaborate and lavish costuming. Beautiful silks and brocades, with intricate symbolic embroidery, have been the rule, and many costumes in use today have been handed down from actor to actor for as long as two hundred years. Quality and care have been of the utmost importance. The costumes are not historically accurate, but are, as Kalvodova states:

. . . syntheses of many elements taken from costumes worn in China from about the seventh to the nineteenth century. They underline and are a formal expression of the character for which they are intended. They are not usually made for the characters of any particular play, nor for certain actors, but for types of characters; there are generals' costumes and tramps' costumes, . . . for poor country women, for fishermen, for concubines, for servants.³⁰

Traditional costumes are much too expensive and cumbersome to copy exactly for The Land of the Dragon, but much depends on the effectiveness of the costuming for this play. In order to produce an effect as close as possible to the authentic classical costumes, the designer has used traditional styles and lines, modified and simplified to meet the requirements of children's theatre. Most of the designs are derived from Chinese theatre, rather than everyday life, and this requires careful attention to credibility. Many children have read books about China and have formed ideas from the illustrations as to how Chinese people dress. They will find most of the costumes in The Land of the Dragon different from their pre-conceived notions, but ready acceptance should not be difficult because of the bright colors and design interest of the costumes.

³⁰Kalvodová, pp. 22-23.

Proper choice of fabrics is extremely important to create the desired effect of lavishness. No theatre budget would allow for authentic materials, therefore careful selection of substitutes for expensive silks and brocades must be made. The impossibly ornate embroidered designs on the traditional costumes will be simplified and the effect retained by the use of appliqués and other devices. All patterns and trim decoration used by the designer are derived from authentic classical Chinese theatre designs. It was necessary to consider the proper choice of fabric for each costume before determining the silhouette, rather than the customary reverse procedure.

The costumes must also be easy to wear. Traditional classical costumes consist of several layers which are always the same for a particular character and worn in a certain way. In the interests of practicality only the visible outer garments will be used in The Land of the Dragon. Much movement will be required of most actors, and cumbersome and heavy costumes would only be a burden. The actors will have enough difficulty accustoming themselves to the unfamiliar styles and the use of fans and "water sleeves."

The costumes have been designed to provide a variety of silhouettes. Wherever possible traditional colors have been used for specific types of characters, since color usage is symbolic in the Chinese classical theatre. Yellow is the royal color, therefore it will be appropriate for Jade Pure to be dressed basically in yellow. Her costume will have clean lines with "water sleeves," and her headdress will be derived from an authentic royal headdress. The costume of Precious Harp received its inspiration from the classical theatre, with the

headpiece of a Chinese goddess. However, the basic color of plum is not authentic for her type of character.

Covet Spring will wear a costume that is primarily mandarin, and therefore Chinese rather than Chinese theatre in derivation. However, his hat will be from the classical theatre, chosen for its comic appearance. The bottom of his robe will stand out with a hoop effect to add to his ludicrous quality. As a "comic character who is an advisor at Court," a traditional role, he is entitled to wear red.

Road Wanderer will wear purple, the scholar's color, for his tunic and hat. This will be relieved by green pants and a breastplate derived from a traditional hero's costume. The style of this costume is markedly different from the others to emphasize that he has come from a distant region.

Costumes for the three Cousins will echo that of Jade Pure, in an understated way, since they are distantly related to royalty. Color will not be traditional, but will be chosen for theatricality.

Twenty-Fourth Cousin will not be costumed in authentic classical theatre style, but will be more like a Chinese peasant, with tunic and trousers to contrast his status as a farmer with that of the Court. The colors will be earth tones.

As the child audience's first introduction to Chinese-type drama, the Stage Manager must be an imposing figure. His costume will be wholly fictional, as there is no direct counterpart in the classical theatre, but all elements of the costume design are borrowed from authentic sources. His will be the most extravagant costume in design, with an elaborate robe, pleated skirt, and "water sleeves." The pattern

on the robe will come from royalty, as will the elaborate headpiece, with long extensions on each side.

The Property Man will wear the traditional black, a color which is customarily associated with lower-class workers. He will have a close fitting hat and a queue, a tunic, and trousers derived from a soldier's uniform.

Makeup in the classical theatre is also traditional, and the makeup "masks" have symbolic styles and colors. Jade Pure, as a kuei-men-tan role, will wear matte white makeup with deep red around the eyes, graded into a pink merging with the white of the cheeks and the sides of the nose. The bridge of the nose will be left white. The eyebrows and corners of the eyes will be penciled to slant upward, and the mouth painted in small decorative curves. The other female characters will have similar makeup.³¹

Road Wanderer, as a hsiao-sheng, will have very light makeup, similar to the tan but paler. The contrast in tints will not be as marked. The Stage Manager will be the only bearded character. The beard is never glued on, but is hung behind the ears by means of wires and rests on the upper lip.³² Covet Spring will have a drooping mustache, designed for comic effect. He will also wear the traditional ch'ou makeup of a white patch over the nose and around the eyes.

Such adaptations of the traditional classical costumes and makeup should give The Land of the Dragon an authentic effect.

³¹Scott, Traditional Chinese Plays, 1:18.

³²Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 22.

The child audiences should be able to accept this degree of stylization within the production of an "oriental" play.

Setting Analysis

The stage of the classical Chinese theatre has traditionally been completely bare, with the use of only a table and two chairs as basic properties to indicate different locales. Formerly, the stage was a covered, raised platform, with two doors at the rear, one for entrances and one for exits. Between the two doors a curtain was hung, often decorated with an embroidered dragon.³³

In order to give an approximation of the Chinese stage, the designer will use a decorative false proscenium with an "inner stage" that retains on the upstage wall the two traditional doors and dragon curtain hung between them. Decoration on the upstage wall will be similar to that on the false proscenium. The only permanent furniture will be the traditional table and two chairs, which will be moved about by the Property Man as needed.

Most of the scenes in The Land of the Dragon have few characters on stage at one time. Therefore, it will be advantageous to raise the lift in Taylor Theatre, forming a forestage that will help to bring the action downstage. The false proscenium will be set just inside the architectural proscenium, and will be flanked by black curtains. This will allow the inner stage and most of the width of the stage in front of these curtains to be used. Downstage right there will be a chair for

³³Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), p. 452.

the Stage Manager, who will remain in view, though not specifically lighted, throughout each scene. At downstage left, balancing the Stage Manager, will be the Property Man with his various hand props. He will sit on the floor or a bench. By bringing the action downstage, it is hoped to create an intimacy with the audience that will enable the children to vicariously participate in the play to a much greater extent than would be possible on a stage of greater depth. Such a bare stage will tax the ingenuity of the director to find variety in staging, but it is necessary in order to produce the play as authentically as possible.

The Property Man will use several hand properties, such as a branch to indicate a tree, a bird cage, a blue cloth to represent a pool, and a painted cloth to indicate a wall. Many other hand properties will be pantomimed, as in the true classical theatre: items such as a plow, cups of water, a flower, and prison chains. Some of the characters will carry fans, which can be extremely expressive. Various set properties, such as an incense burner on a tripod, which indicates a palace locale, will be used.

Stage lighting does not assume the importance in The Land of the Dragon that it does in many other plays. General illumination will be required for many scenes. When the Stage Manager is speaking between scenes, a spotlight will be on him, and the rest of the stage will be dimmed, but not blacked out, while the Property Man proceeds with necessary changes.

In set design and execution, The Land of the Dragon will not need to depend on many elaborate sets. Its charm will come mainly

from other components, such as acting stylization and costuming. The decorative false proscenium will provide a "finishing touch."

Justification

The Land of the Dragon is a tightly written play with plenty of attention-holding action, and yet with sufficient "wiggle scenes" to accommodate the youth of its audience. It allows the child to enjoy oriental theatre on his own level of understanding, through reasonable adaptation of Chinese costumes and conventions. A production will be entertaining and colorful.

A presentational approach in interpretation of The Land of the Dragon will be preferable to a representational approach. Since the child audiences are primarily interested in action, movement and comic elements must be stressed. A balance must be maintained that will allow clarity on one hand and an adequate degree of Chinese authenticity on the other.

Conclusion

Kalvodová, in Chinese Theatre, says:

This is precisely where the strength and fascination of the Chinese theatre is to be found--in the fact that it is not encumbered with awkward stage properties, a false imitation of reality, and that it lets the audience give free rein to their imagination and concentrate only on the actor, who interprets the action and the thoughts of the play and is at the same time the stage designer.³⁴

The Chinese classical theatre has much to offer the western observer, and The Land of the Dragon presents a tantalizing taste of a different culture. The Chinese dearly love their theatre, and

³⁴Kalvodová, Chinese Theatre, p. 14.

the director hopes that this small glimpse will encourage western children to love not only the occidental but the oriental theatre as well. Then they will be able to emulate the Chinese, who "... go to the theatre as if on a visit to their best friends. . . ." ³⁵

³⁵Ibid., p. 39.

CHAPTER II

PROMPT BOOK

Act I, Scene 1

(TIME: LONG, LONG AGO. PLACE: CHINA, THE LAND OF THE DRAGON. THE CURTAINS REMAIN OPEN THROUGHOUT. THE STAGE IS COMPLETELY EMPTY. A DECORATIVE FALSE PROSCENIUM IS SET JUST UPSTAGE OF THE PROSCENIUM LINE, AND FRAMES AN INNER STAGE. ON THE UPSTAGE WALL OF THE INNER STAGE ARE TWO DOORWAYS, ONE ON EITHER SIDE OF A LARGE PAINTING OF A CHINESE DRAGON, UP CENTER. EXTREME RIGHT IS A SEAT FOR THE STAGE MANAGER, AND EXTREME LEFT IS A SEAT FOR THE PROPERTY MAN, WITH HAND PROPERTIES PLACED NEXT TO IT. [SEE FIGURE 1.] CHINESE MUSIC, RECORDED, IS PLAYED BEFORE THE LIGHTS COME UP ON STAGE. MUSIC CONTINUES, UNDER THE DIALOGUE, UNTIL THE ENTRANCE OF JADE PURE. THE PROPERTY MAN ENTERS LEFT AND STRIKES A LARGE CONG AT EXTREME LEFT. THE STAGE MANAGER ENTERS RIGHT AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER. HE IS GORGEOUSLY DRESSED AND CARRIES AN ORNAMENTAL FAN WHICH HE USES GRACEFULLY.)

STAGE MANAGER

(BOWING) Greetings, Exalted Audience. You are most welcome. May the humble efforts of our actors to please you meet with flowery success. I am the Stage Manager, here to introduce to you each scene as it unfolds. You must pay no attention to me, for to a polite audience I am invisible! (THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER WITH BENCH, WHICH HE PLACES THERE. HE IS DRESSED ENTIRELY IN BLACK. HE SHUFFLES WITH MADDENING SLOWNESS; HIS FACE IS VACANT AND SLEEPY-LOOKING.) This lazy fellow is our Property Man. He, too, should be invisible as he prepares the stage. (PROPERTY MAN CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER.) The first scene takes place in the apartment of the lovely and gracious Jade Pure, Princess of the Southern Kingdom. There is the door, as you can plainly see. (THE PROPERTY MAN PANTOMIMES OPENING AN IMAGINARY DOOR, STEPS THROUGH IT, AND CLOSES THE DOOR AFTER HIM.) And there the window. (THE PROPERTY MAN OPENS AN IMAGINARY WINDOW, THRUSTS HIS HEAD OUT AND IN AGAIN, THEN CLOSES THE WINDOW AND SHUFFLES TO HIS SEAT AT EXTREME LEFT, SITS.) But our play begins. Approaching us is the Princess Jade Pure herself. I bow to you, and respectfully withdraw. (HE BOWS AND CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, WHERE HE SITS THROUGHOUT THE PLAY. JADE PURE, CHARMINGLY DRESSED, ENTERS UP RIGHT AND CROSSES DOWN CENTER, FACING THE AUDIENCE.)

JADE PURE

I am Jade Pure, Princess of the Southern Kingdom. The death of my father, the Emperor, some years ago, left me an orphan, and alone. Sorrowfully I seat myself to await the coming of my cousins and the start of another lonely day.

GROUND PLAN
THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

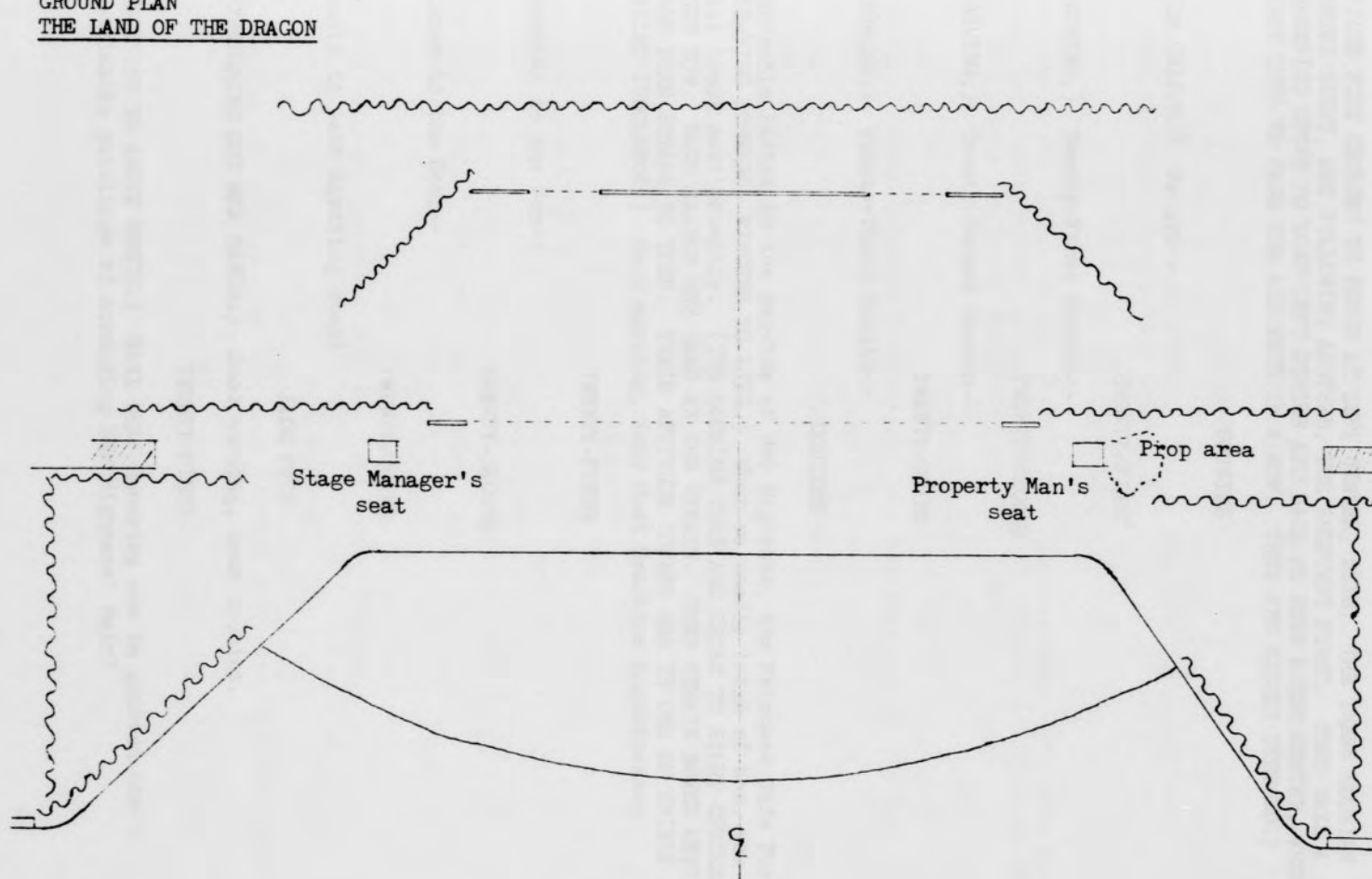


FIGURE 1

(JADE PURE CROSSES TO BENCH AT LEFT CENTER, SITS. THE THREE COUSINS ENTER RIGHT, ONE FOLLOWING ANOTHER, THE SHORTEST FIRST. THEY MAKE A SWEEPING CROSS TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AND BACK TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER, WHERE THEY TURN TO FACE THE AUDIENCE IN A ROW. THEY ARE RICHLY DRESSED.)

COUSINS

(IN UNISON.) We are--

TWENTY-FIRST

(BOWING.) Twenty-First Cousin--

TWENTY-SECOND

(BOWING.) Twenty-Second Cousin--

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOWING.) Twenty-Third Cousin--

COUSINS

Honorable ladies in the service of Her Highness, the Princess Jade Pure. (LEANING FORWARD, FINGERS TO LIPS.) What we really think of her, you will learn most promptly. (THE COUSINS TURN AND CROSS TO RIGHT CENTER, THEN BOW. EACH RAISES HER HEAD AS SHE SPEAKS. THEY REMAIN BOWED UNTIL JADE PURE SPEAKS TO THEM. THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD HER IS ONE OF THINLY VEILED INSOLENT.) Good morning, Your Most Gracious Augustness--

TWENTY-FIRST

Daughter to the Sun--

TWENTY-SECOND

Sister to the Moon--

TWENTY-THIRD

Cousin to each dazzling star!

JADE PURE

(STRETCHING OUT HER HANDS.) Good morning, dear cousins.

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO ABOVE BENCH.) Will this unworthy one be granted the inestimable privilege of arranging Her Highness' hair?

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSING TO RIGHT OF BENCH.) And I, the care of the five nails on this, the Princess' right hand? (KNEELS AND TAKES JADE PURE'S RIGHT HAND.)

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSING TO DOWN LEFT OF BENCH.) And I, the five remaining here? (KNEELS AND TAKES JADE PURE'S LEFT HAND.)

JADE PURE

Yes, yes, yes. Begin, I beg of you. And cheer my heart with some gay tale, for I am bitterly unhappy. (THE COUSINS ARRANGE HER HAIR AND BUFF HER NAILS WITH IMAGINARY EQUIPMENT, AS THEY SPEAK.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(PRETENDING ASTONISHMENT.) Unhappy? You, the Princess of the Southern Kingdom?

TWENTY-SECOND

How can this be so?

TWENTY-THIRD

(WITH A TITTER.) And why?

JADE PURE

You know as well as I!

TWENTY-FIRST

(NODDING WISELY.) Ah, yes, to be sure.

TWENTY-SECOND

In just one week you celebrate your eighteenth birthday.

TWENTY-FIRST

If you are not married when the clock strikes noon that day, you shall lose all claim to the throne.

TWENTY-THIRD

And Lady Precious Harp, sister to your father, shall become Empress.

JADE PURE

(SIGHING DEEPLY.) Yes.

TWENTY-THIRD

But no man yet has wanted to marry you, because-- (PAUSING DELIBERATELY.)

JADE PURE

Because?

TWENTY-FIRST

You ask?

TWENTY-SECOND

(MALICIOUSLY.) All know the reason why.

TWENTY-THIRD

Does not the Princess?

JADE PURE

Yes, yes. Because my face is ugly. Do not hesitate to say it.

COUSINS

(SCORNFULLY.) Ugly, ugly, ugly!

JADE PURE

(RISES, RUNS DOWN RIGHT CENTER, FACING DOWN.) Cruel hateful word!

COUSINS

(RISING.) We have offended you?

JADE PURE

(HER HANDS OVER HER FACE.) You have! You have!

TWENTY-FIRST

(HAUGHTILY. CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER.) You have offended us, Your Highness!

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER.) First you bid us speak--

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER.) And then you storm! (WITH QUICK MINCING STEPS THEY HAVE LINED UP, FACING RIGIDLY DOWN CENTER.)

JADE PURE

Ah--pardon, cousins.

COUSINS

(TURNING WITH ONE MOTION, AND CROSSING RIGHT CENTER.) We go!

JADE PURE

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, STOPPING THE COUSINS.) O, do not! I have no one else to talk to. Well I know you speak the truth. My aunt, Lady Precious Harp, and Covet Spring, the Chancellor, say it too. They and you say that I am ugly, and I see no one else. And yet--come near, dear cousin. (JADE PURE TAKES THE HAND OF TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN AND LEADS HER A SHORT CROSS RIGHT CENTER. SHE TOUCHES LIGHTLY THE GIRL'S EYELIDS AND EYEBROWS, AND THEN HER OWN.) You have eyes set so--and brows above them. So do I!

TWENTY-FIRST

(PULLING AWAY QUICKLY AND CROSSING DOWN RIGHT. FACES AWAY DOWN RIGHT.) But they are not the same!

JADE PURE

(CROSSING TO TWENTY-SECOND COUSIN.) And see--your nose is fashioned so--and mine feels very like.

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSING LEFT CENTER. FACES DOWN LEFT.) Oh, nothing like!

JADE PURE

(STEPPING TOWARD TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN, WHO TURNS UPSTAGE.) Mouths cannot be so very different, when their sizes are so nearly one. (CROSSING TO CENTER.) And what else is there? Skin--but mine is soft; my fingers tell me. Hair--you dress it well.

TWENTY-FIRST

(HER BACK TO THE PRINCESS.) Extremely well!

JADE PURE

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN.) Then let me see for myself! Bring me a mirror, cousins-- (TWENTY-FIRST SHAKES HER HEAD VIGOROUSLY. JADE PURE CROSSES TO CENTER, TURNS TO EACH COUSIN.) Dear cousin--it is my hair I wish to see--truly that is all! (EACH COUSIN SHAKES HER HEAD.)

COUSINS

(TURNING CENTER TO FACE JADE PURE, ARMS FOLDED PRIMLY, IN UNISON.) No, no, no! "By order of the Lady Precious Harp, Her Highness Princess Jade Pure shall not be permitted--"

JADE PURE

I know. "Shall not be permitted to possess a mirror." (CROSSING RESTLESSLY TO THE IMAGINARY WINDOW DOWN LEFT CENTER.) Shall I stay in here forever, with no mirror and no suitors, never to go outside to the garden I see from my window?

TWENTY-THIRD

(WITH A DERISIVE TITTER.) No doubt!

JADE PURE

But then I am a prisoner, no better off than my tiny caged bird here! (THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER WITH A BIRDCAGE, WHICH HE HOLDS ALOFT. JADE PURE TOUCHES IT LIGHTLY AS SHE SPEAKS TO THE IMAGINARY BIRD INSIDE. [SEE FIGURE 2.]) Do you hate it too, poor thing? Why, where are your seeds! Almost gone? And very little water! Cousins, you have not been kind to him. (THEY IGNORE HER AND PRIMP.) I shall go to bring fresh water and seeds myself. (SHE EXITS UP RIGHT.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(KNEELS ON FLOOR DOWN RIGHT.) Let her, then! (TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD COUSINS CROSS TO HER, SITTING ON HER RIGHT AND HER LEFT. TWENTY-FIRST EXTENDS HER HANDS TO HER SISTERS; THEY BUFF HER NAILS JUST AS THEY DID JADE PURE'S.)

TWENTY-SECOND

How restless she becomes!

TWENTY-THIRD

There is no chance of her escaping?



FIGURE 2

TWENTY-FIRST

None. A guard stays at the door.

TWENTY-SECOND

The window is too high.

TWENTY-THIRD

And she has no friends to help.

TWENTY-FIRST

Ouch! (SHE PULLS HER HAND AWAY FROM TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN, GLARING AT HER AND THEN AT HER FINGERS. THE PROPERTY MAN WHO, LISTING TO THE RIGHT, IS ABOUT TO DOZE OFF, PULLS HIMSELF UPRIGHT WITH A START.)

TWENTY-SECOND

What if someone learns of the Princess' beauty?

TWENTY-FIRST

Stupid! How? There is no way.

TWENTY-THIRD

What if Jade Pure learns of it herself?

TWENTY-FIRST

She never can, with no one near to tell her, and no mirror. Ouch! (SHE PULLS HER HAND AWAY FROM TWENTY-SECOND COUSIN, REGARDS HER NAILS TENDERLY. THE PROPERTY MAN, WHO HAS LISTED TO THE LEFT, AGAIN JERKS UPRIGHT, AWAKENED BY HER SHRIEK.) That is why she cannot go outside into the garden. There are pools and streams of water there.

TWENTY-SECOND

She might see her face in one of them.

TWENTY-THIRD

Or see a gardener.

TWENTY-FIRST

Exactly. (RISING QUICKLY. CROSSING RIGHT CENTER.) Hush--someone is coming.

TWENTY-SECOND

(LOOKING UP LEFT.) Lady Precious Harp--

TWENTY-THIRD

And Covet Spring.

(LADY PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING ENTER UP LEFT AND CROSS TO CENTER. SHE IS A COLDLY HANDSOME WOMAN, AND IS EXQUISITELY COSTUMED. HE IS A CORPULENT WHEEZING ANCIENT, AND CARRIES A HUGE FAN, WHICH HE FLUTTERS AFFECTEDLY. THE PROPERTY MAN SIGHS DEEPLY, AND RESTS THE BIRDCAGE ON HIS HIP, ASSUMING A COMFORTABLE POSITION. HE IS DOWN LEFT. THE COUSINS RISE AND LOOK CENTER.)

COUSINS

(BOWING.) Most hearty greetings to Her Exalted Ladyship.

PRECIOUS HARP

(ARROGANTLY.) I, Lady Precious Harp, sister to the dear departed Emperor, graciously accept your unworthy greetings. (GREETING SLEEVES.)

COUSINS

(BOWING.) We bow in welcome to His Mighty Excellency.

COVET SPRING

(ALSO ARROGANTLY.) I, Covet Spring, Chancellor of the Southern Kingdom, nod in reply. (NODS AFTER SPEECH.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(GLANCES ABOUT IN SUDDEN ALARM. CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER, TURNS.) Where is the Princess, my niece? Where is she? Speak!

COVET SPRING

She has not escaped?

TWENTY-FIRST

No. She has gone to fetch water for that wretched bird.

PRECIOUS HARP

Do not leave her unattended for a moment! (TO TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN, WHO EXITS UP RIGHT.) You--run quickly to watch her. "A single false move loses the game." (SHE CROSSES TO BENCH LEFT CENTER AND SITS. SENDING AWAY SLEEVE.)

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING UPSTAGE OF BENCH.) She might find a pane of glass in which to see her face, or a polished kettle. (FANNING HIMSELF VIOLENTLY.) That would be a tragedy!

PRECIOUS HARP

It would indeed. For, knowing her own beauty, she might prove troublesome. I should much regret using violence until after I am Empress.

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Have no fear. We shall watch her diligently, mindful of the generous reward you have promised my sisters and me.

TWENTY-SECOND

(POINTEDLY.) The most generous reward!

PRECIOUS HARP

(GOLDLY.) Reward--ah, yes.

TWENTY-FIRST

You had not forgotten?

PRECIOUS HARP

Indeed not. Faithful servants should be fittingly repaid, and so you will be--most fittingly, when I ascend the throne.

TWENTY-FIRST

(BOLDLY.) And not a moment later! (CROSSES TO TWENTY-SECOND COUSIN RIGHT CENTER. ASIDE.) I mistrust her tone of voice.

PRECIOUS HARP

(ASIDE TO COVET SPRING. ASIDE SLEEVE.) Fittingly repaid indeed! They know too much!

COVET SPRING

(TO HER, HIS FAN VIBRATING VIGOROUSLY.) Impertinent maids! (PRECIOUS HARP DUCKS, AND FIXES HER HAIR WHICH WAS DISTURBED BY THE BREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(ASIDE.) Old witch!

TWENTY-SECOND

(ASIDE.) Fat rogue!

COVET SPRING

Here is the Princess.

(COVET SPRING AND PRECIOUS HARP BOW SLIGHTLY AS JADE PURE ENTERS UP RIGHT AND CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT, WITH IMAGINARY CUPS OF WATER AND SEEDS. TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN ENTERS UP RIGHT BEHIND HER, AND CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER.)

JADE PURE

Welcome, worthy aunt and noble Chancellor.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT TO JADE PURE. FALSELY SWEET.) Sweet child, good day. How is my niece?

JADE PURE

(BUSYING HERSELF AT THE CAGE WHICH THE PROPERTY MAN QUICKLY HOLDS UP IN POSITION AGAIN.) In good health, thank you. And you?

PRECIOUS HARP

Well enough, well enough. (JADE PURE TURNS FROM THE CAGE AND THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT AND SITS, YAWNING.)

JADE PURE

Dear Aunt, may I slip out for just an hour or two? There is no one near to be frightened by my ugliness. Please--just an hour!

PRECIOUS HARP

(COLDLY.) My sweet niece, no.

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER.) Be guided by your aunt, your father's sister, in whose charge he placed you.

PRECIOUS HARP

(AS JADE PURE TURNS SORROWFULLY AWAY, PLACING A HAND GINGERLY ON HER SHOULDER.) There! I shall be generous. Come with us as we leave, and you may glance just once out of the door. Come, child. (SHE EXITS UP LEFT.)

JADE PURE

(FOLLOWING PRECIOUS HARP; EXITING UP LEFT.) Oh, thank you, thank you!

COVET SPRING

(EXITING UP LEFT.) Lady Precious Harp is ever gracious! (THE COUSINS, WHO HAVE BOWED AS THE OTHERS EXITED, NOW STRAIGHTEN AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER.)

TWENTY-THIRD

Ugh! What a dreadful pair!

TWENTY-SECOND

Such arrogance!

TWENTY-FIRST

(FURIOUS. PACING BACK AND FORTH FROM CENTER TO LEFT CENTER.) Servants! We are of the royal blood as well as she!

TWENTY-SECOND

But only distantly related.

TWENTY-THIRD

Do you know, I almost wish a suitor might arrive in time to wed the princess. (GIGGLING) Then old Precious Harp would howl! (TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD COUSINS GIGGLE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Why should she have the throne?

TWENTY-SECOND

How can we stop her?

TWENTY-FIRST

(SUDDENLY. CROSSES TO CENTER.) Sisters, I have a plan of plans! A suitor shall arrive!

TWENTY-SECOND

But who?

TWENTY-FIRST

Our brother, Twenty-Fourth Cousin!

TWENTY-THIRD

Our farmer-brother?

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER, PRETENDING TO PLOW STUPIDLY. TURNS.) That simple-minded lout, who plows his field like this--

TWENTY-THIRD

(WITH A TITTER.) Without two coins in his ragged smock!

TWENTY-SECOND

(ALSO TITTING.) A suitor to the Princess?

TWENTY-FIRST

(BECKONING TO THE OTHERS. THEY CROSS TO HER. SHARPLY.) Be still and listen. True, he is nothing as he is, but what is to prevent our buying splendid robes, and teaching him court manners?

TWENTY-THIRD

(GIGGLING) But a suitor to Jade Pure!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CLUTCHING HER ARM.) Think! Is there any other who seeks her hand? Where are his rivals?

TWENTY-SECOND

(SLOWLY.) Why--why, there is not a one!

TWENTY-FIRST

Exactly! Since there is no other, he will be crowned Emperor.

TWENTY-THIRD

But what of us?

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) We shall rule through him, the poor weak thing. He has no mind or spirit of his own!

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) But do you think it will succeed? She might refuse him!

(TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER TO THE OTHERS.)

TWENTY-FIRST

What? Refuse a foreign prince bedecked in jewels, dazzling as a peacock, bringing costly gifts? Come, we must send for Twenty-Fourth Cousin. (STARTS TO EXIT.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Dear brother!

TWENTY-THIRD

Dear, dear brother! (THEY MAKE A SWEEPING, CURVED CROSS, EXITING UP RIGHT. HASTILY AND WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT.)

JADE PURE

(ENTERS UP LEFT IN TIME TO SEE THE COUSINS EXITING. CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER.) Where do my cousins go so hastily? Just see, they walk out through the door as if it were a simple thing. But I, the Princess, may not leave! (PANTOMIMES OPENING THE WINDOW.) They cross the garden when they please, but I remain shut up day after day. (A BIRD TRILL IS SOUNDED BY THE PROPERTY MAN, WHO RUNS TARDILY IN WITH THE BIRDCAGE, AND CROSSES TO JADE PURE.) Will you sing in your cage, little bird? I cannot sing in mine. (SUDDENLY.) But there is something I can do; I can set you free, poor prisoner. Here, perch upon my finger-- (PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT WITH BIRDCAGE.) carefully now-- I shall bring you to the open window. There--slip between the bars-- go free! (ANOTHER BIRD TRILL.) I must remain! (SHE EXITS UP RIGHT, HANDS TO HER FACE. THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO BENCH, CARRIES IT TO EXTREME LEFT. THE STAGE MANAGER ENTERS FROM EXTREME RIGHT, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, FACING THE AUDIENCE. MUSIC IN.)

Act I, Scene 2

STAGE MANAGER

For the next scene of our illustrious play, we are transported to this distant field. The sun shines hot upon the earth. The farmer with his plow draws near. (EXITS EXTREME RIGHT. MUSIC OUT.)

(TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN ENTERS LEFT, PLOWING HIS FIELD WITH AN IMAGINARY HANDPLOW. HE IS GUILLESS AND CHEERFUL IN APPEARANCE. HIS COSTUME IS A DRAB COLOR AND QUITE SHABBY. A LARGE HAT IS ON HIS HEAD. WHEN HE REACHES CENTER STAGE HE STOPS, STRAIGHTENS, DRAWS A HAND ACROSS HIS FOREHEAD, REMOVES HIS HAT, AND HOLDING IT IN FRONT OF HIM, TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

I am, as you see, a simple farmer, yet Twenty-Fourth Cousin to the ugly Princess Jade Pure, whom my sisters serve. They are fashionable ladies accustomed to court life, but I have no desire to go to the city. I am a farmer. Now you see me plowing my field. (HE PLOWS TO RIGHT CENTER, TURNS, AND PLOWS TO LEFT CENTER, WHERE HE STOPS. ROAD WANDERER ENTERS RIGHT, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER. HE IS A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN.)

ROAD WANDERER

(TO THE AUDIENCE, MODESTLY.) I am Road Wanderer, the humble hero of this play. You will learn more of me as I talk with the good farmer. (TURNS TO TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(WHO HAS BEEN WATCHING HIM.) Good day, sir.

ROAD WANDERER

(SHORT CROSS TOWARD TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN.) Good day to you, sir. (TURNS RIGHT, CALLING OFFSTAGE.) Go back, Small One, and wait. Mrograff--uzcark!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(HIS EYES WIDE, BUT POLITELY.) You are with a friend?

ROAD WANDERER

Why, yes. My--my watch dog.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(EAGERLY CROSSING DOWN CENTER TO ROAD WANDERER.) I have a great fondness for dogs, sir. May I perhaps see this one of yours?

ROAD WANDERER

(DOUBTFULLY.) He is--of an unusual type. Tell me, friend, how do you call yourself?

TWENTY-FOURTH

Twenty-Fourth Cousin--that is, twenty-four times removed from the royal family. I am a farmer, as you see. (PROPERTY MAN ENTERS WITH STYLIZED TREE BRANCHES, CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER.)

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSES TO TREE LEFT CENTER, SITS, PRETENDING TO LEAN AGAINST TREE.)
I do. Is this your tree that I sit down beneath, and lean my back
against? (PROPERTY MAN WAVES BRANCHES LAGUIDLY OVER ROAD WANDERER'S
HEAD.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

It is. (PROUDLY WALKING AROUND.) All this is mine, (POINTING) and that
small cottage--oh, it is little enough. My sisters say that it is
nothing. They are elegant ladies who serve the ugly Princess Jade Pure
in the palace.

ROAD WANDERER

Indeed! What would they say of me who has no more than Small One, and
my health?

TWENTY-FOURTH

You have no house?

ROAD WANDERER

I want no house. I am a student who wanders here and there, to and fro.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSES TO ROAD WANDERER. GOES DOWN ON ONE KNEE.) See here, how do
you live? What do you eat?

ROAD WANDERER

That is simple, very simple. I have many friends.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Oh?

ROAD WANDERER

They bring me the ripest fruits from the topmost branches, the tenderest
roots from below the ground, the sweetest honey, the choicest nuts.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(STANDS UP, LEANS OVER WITH HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES. [SEE FIGURE 3.])
What are these friends of yours? Magicians?



FIGURE 3

ROAD WANDERER

No. They are the birds, the insects, the creatures that climb and dig and swim--in short, all animals known to me.

TWENTY-FOURTH

They are all your friends? But why? How?

ROAD WANDERER

I know a secret. I am one who can speak and understand their many languages.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(TAKES A FEW STEPS AWAY, THEN BACK. SCRATCHES HIS HEAD IN BEWILDERMENT.)
My ancestors! Whose languages?

ROAD WANDERER

Why, the languages of my friends, the animals. The speech of every smallest one of them is known to me.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(SHORT CROSS TO CENTER.) Ho! That I cannot believe. You are joking with me.

ROAD WANDERER

(SITTING UP.) I swear it is the truth. I learned it in my wanderings. Show me the creature I cannot converse with.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(LOOKING ABOUT.) But--but there is no creature here. Ah, wait--I have it! Your pet--your dog! Call him here!

ROAD WANDERER

(RISING HASTILY) No, no--not Small One.

TWENTY-FOURTH

A-ha! You dare not try!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN.) It is for your sake that I--

TWENTY-FOURTH

You shall prove what you say! (CROSSING TO RIGHT, CALLING OFFSTAGE.)
Here, Small One! Come, boy, come!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO RIGHT.) Wait! It is no dog!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Good dog! Come here! (HIS VOICE RAISES TO A SHRIEK OF TERROR.) Oh--oh--oh! (HE RUNS SCREAMING ACROSS THE STAGE AND HIDES BEHIND THE TREE, LOOKING OUT. SMALL ONE, A DRAGON, ENTERS FROM RIGHT WITH A BOUND AND A ROAR. HE PAUSES TO WIGGLE HIS TAIL, THEN RUNS TO THE TREE. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE TREE, BACK AND FORTH. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN BREAKS AWAY, RUNS TO ROAD WANDERER AT RIGHT, COLLAPSES ON HIS KNEES ON THE RIGHT OF ROAD WANDERER, CLINGING TO HIM. SMALL ONE CROSSES TO CENTER.)

ROAD WANDERER

There! Do you see? Small One, araf--err-gad.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(MOANING.) Oh--oh--oh--

ROAD WANDERER

(GOOD-HUMOREDLY.) Cease wailing, man. Do you not see that he is harmless if you are my friend? (STROKING THE DRAGON, WHICH RUBS ITS HEAD AGAINST HIM.) Yes, this is Small One, my fond watch-dog.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(FEARFULLY, GETTING TO HIS FEET.) Dog, indeed! Who would have guessed a dragon was your pet? Is he--are you certain he is tame, kind sir?

ROAD WANDERER

He will obey me. You need have no fear. Mowta--kagota--harsk.

TWENTY-FOURTH

What? What do you say? (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT AS DRAGON STARTS FOR HIM.)
He comes!

ROAD WANDERER

Wait! Wait! I have told him to approach, and bow to you.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(STARING, OPEN-MOUTHED, AS THE DRAGON CROSSES TO HIM AND BOWS.) You spoke to him?

ROAD WANDERER

Have I not told you that I can? Will you see further proof? (TWENTY-FOURTH RUNS TO CENTER.) Here is your hat, dropped as you ran. Small One shall be told to take it to you. Quirtech--mowta harrad. (HE PICKS UP HAT FROM FLOOR AND HANDS IT TO SMALL ONE, WHO OFFERS IT TO TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN. APPROACHING CAUTIOUSLY, TWENTY-FOURTH FINALLY GRABS HAT AND RUNS DOWN LEFT.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROUCHING.) But he obeys! My head is spinning! (SMALL ONE CROSSES TO ROAD WANDERER RIGHT CENTER, GROWLING GUTTERALLY. ROAD WANDERER THROWS BACK HIS HEAD AND LAUGHS HEARTILY.)

ROAD WANDERER

Small One, that is not polite.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(APPROACHES CAUTIOUSLY DURING THE NEXT FEW SPEECHES, READY TO RUN AT THE SLIGHTEST MOVE BY THE DRAGON.) See--you laugh. What has he said?

ROAD WANDERER

Eh? Nothing.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Nothing? (THE DRAGON MUTTERS AGAIN.)

ROAD WANDERER

(LAUGHING AS HE STROKES ITS HEAD.) Oggaruk--murraf.

TWENTY-FOURTH

I will believe it, truly, that you talk together if you tell me what the monster said. Was it about me?

ROAD WANDERER

Well, yes. He merely asked me--

TWENTY-FOURTH

(STILL CLOSER.) What?

ROAD WANDERER

Who the foolish-looking dunce was I was speaking to, and remarked--

TWENTY-FOURTH

(BRAVER, STRAIGHTENS UP.) Oh, he did, did he? What else?

ROAD WANDERER

That you might serve as dinner for him, but appeared too lean and stringy!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(LEAPING AWAY IN FRIGHT AS SMALL ONE SNAPS PLAYFULLY AT HIS ANKLES. RUNS DOWN LEFT AND CROUCHES READY TO RUN.) Aaaahhh!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER. SMALL ONE CROSSES TO RIGHT, SETTLES DOWN.) Come back! He meant no harm. But do you now believe my power with animals?

TWENTY-FOURTH

Oh, yes! Indeed I do! You will forgive this humble toiler for his doubts? Such knowledge is beyond belief; that is it seemed-- (A BIRD TRILL IS SOUNDED BY THE PROPERTY MAN.)

ROAD WANDERER

Hush! Listen!

TWENTY-FOURTH

What do you hear?

ROAD WANDERER

(INDICATING THE BRANCH WHICH THE PROPERTY MAN HOLDS.) That small bird in the tree. She tells of a prisoner--I will call her closer. (HE TRILLS, HOLDING UP A FINGER AS IF INVITING A BIRD TO ALIGHT UPON IT. THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT, SITS.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO ROAD WANDERER.) Why, she comes to sit upon your finger! (A TRILL FROM THE PROPERTY MAN.) Listen to her song!

ROAD WANDERER

(LISTENING.) Hush--she tells me of a girl--a lovely maiden--shut up in a tower--

TWENTY-FOURTH

But how does she know this?

ROAD WANDERER

(AFTER LISTENING TO ANOTHER TRILL.) She was a caged bird in the prisoner's room--until her young mistress set her free.

TWENTY-FOURTH

And the girl?

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER.) Is a prisoner still. She longs to run about the garden in the sun, and through the meadows--but is not permitted--

TWENTY-FOURTH

What a cruel fate!

ROAD WANDERER

(AFTER ANOTHER TRILL BY THE PROPERTY MAN.) Ah--the little bird asks me to free her mistress--help her escape from the tower.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Good! "To help another helps yourself."

ROAD WANDERER

(SHORT CROSS DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) But it is no concern of mine. I want no gratitude, no gifts, no one to care for and look after.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(AS A PARTICULARLY LOUD TWITTERING SOUNDS.) How the bird does chirp!

ROAD WANDERER

She scolds me for my words--and doubtless she is right. Well, then, I shall go to see this prisoner, to learn if she is worthy. Then, perhaps--good-bye, friend Cousin; may we meet again! (ROAD WANDERER CROSSES TO RIGHT. SMALL ONE EXITS RIGHT.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

I wish the same. (WISTFULLY.) A lovely prisoner. How will you find her?

ROAD WANDERER

On the back of Small One, who can fly--like all dragons. I shall follow this small bird. (HE TOSSES HIS HAND INTO THE AIR, AS IF TO SEND OFF THE IMAGINARY BIRD, AND TRILLS ONCE MORE. THERE IS AN ANSWER FROM THE PROPERTY MAN EXTREME LEFT.) Now she will lead us there. Farewell! (EXITS RIGHT. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN WAVES A HAND FORLORNLY.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Farewell! May your shadow not grow less! (GAZES UP ABOVE THE AUDIENCE, AWED.) Why, there my friend goes, on the dragon's back! (WISTFULLY.) Such a life of high adventure, while to this poor wretch no moment of excitement comes. Alas, I still must plow-- (GOES TO IMAGINARY PLOW AT CENTER, PLOWS A FEW FEET TOWARD LEFT, SEES MESSENGER OFFSTAGE LEFT AND STOPS.) But look! Drawing near my cottage door--a messenger, in handsome dress. From whom? What message does he bring? (CALLING.) I come--I come! (EXITING LEFT.) Perhaps adventure knocks with him! (MUSIC IN.)

Act I, Scene 3

(PROPERTY MAN CROSSES UPSTAGE AND EXITS UP LEFT, RE-ENTERING IMMEDIATELY UP RIGHT, DRAGGING A TABLE, WHICH HE PLACES CENTER. HE CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT AND GETS BENCH, CROSSES TO CENTER AND PLACES BENCH TO THE RIGHT OF THE TABLE. [SEE FIGURE 4.] HE CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT AND SITS.)

STAGE MANAGER

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT. SPEAKS TO AUDIENCE.) Our scene has changed now to the royal garden outside Princess Jade Pure's window. Here in this stone tower she stays a prisoner, looking down from her high window. (CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. JADE PURE ENTERS FROM UP RIGHT, CROSSES CENTER TO TABLE. PROPERTY MAN, CROSSING TO CENTER, HELPS HER CLIMB UP ON TABLE, THEN CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT. JADE PURE WEARS A SCARF WHICH MAY BE BROUGHT FORWARD TO SERVE AS A VEIL. SHE PLACES HER HANDS ON EITHER SIDE OF AN IMAGINARY WINDOW FRAME. MUSIC OUT.)

JADE PURE

Alas, I am forlorn! Not even my sweet caged bird to cheer my loneliness! While there below me stretch the beauties of the countryside which I shall never know. Why am I so ugly? Why? If it were not so, I should marry and escape this hateful prison. (ROAD WANDERER ENTERS CAUTIOUSLY FROM RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY SMALL ONE, WHO PUFFS AND SIGHS FROM HIS RECENT EXERTIONS. THEY PAUSE.) What was that? I see nothing. No--it was the sighing of my heart--no more.

GROUND PLAN
THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

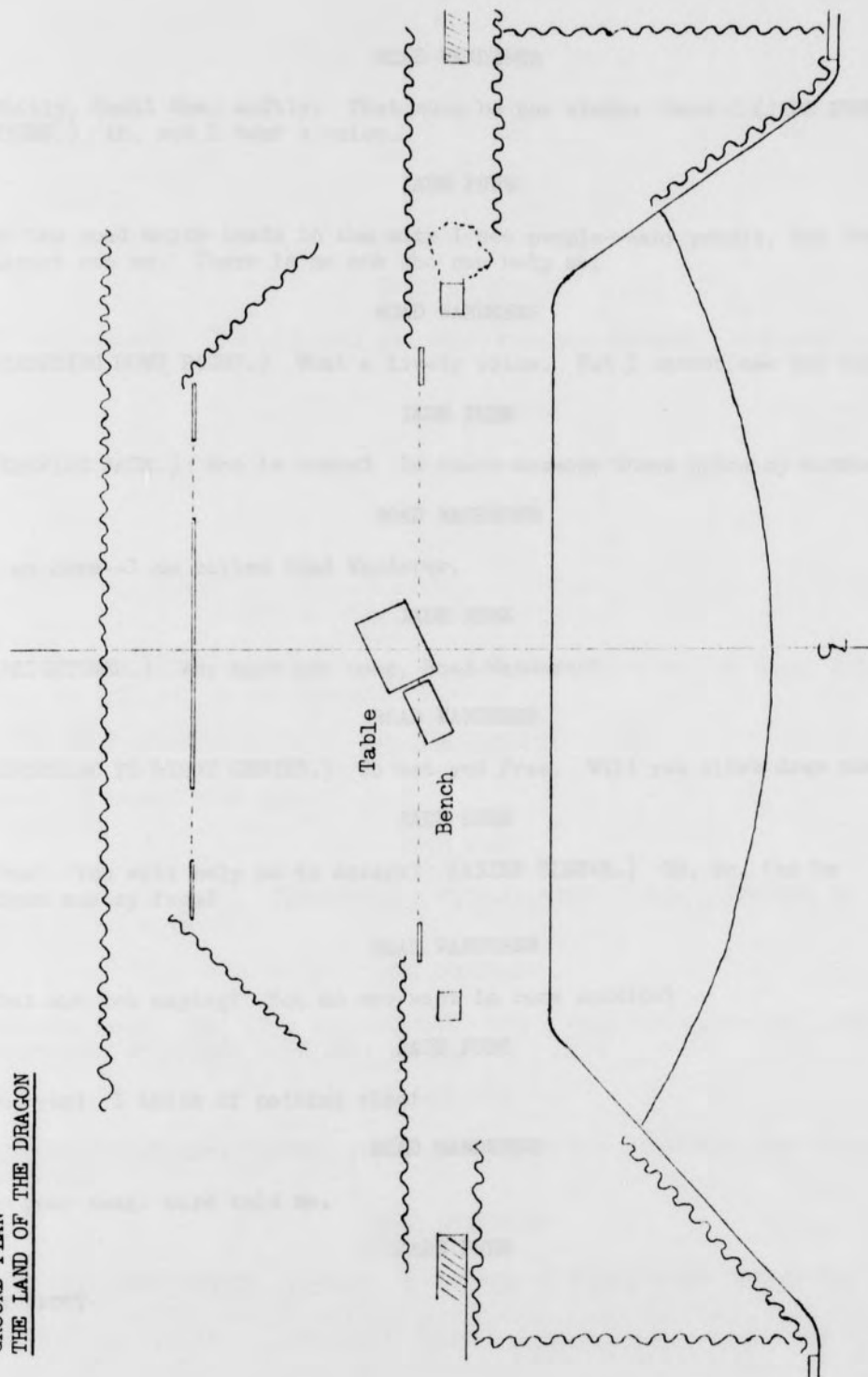


FIGURE 4

ROAD WANDERER

Softly, Small One, softly. That must be her window there. (JADE PURE SIGHS.) Ah, now I hear a voice.

JADE PURE

On the road which leads to the city I see people--many people, but they cannot see me. There is no one who can help me.

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.) What a lovely voice. But I cannot see her face.

JADE PURE

(DRAWING BACK.) Who is there? Is there someone there below my window?

ROAD WANDERER

I am here--I am called Road Wanderer.

JADE PURE

(FRIGHTENED.) Why have you come, Road Wanderer?

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER.) To set you free. Will you climb down now?

JADE PURE

Free? You will help me to escape? (ASIDE SLEEVE.) Oh, no, for he might see my face!

ROAD WANDERER

What are you saying? You do not want to come outside?

JADE PURE

Oh, yes! I think of nothing else!

ROAD WANDERER

So your small bird told me.

JADE PURE

My bird?

ROAD WANDERER

The bird you freed. I understood her song. (SMALL ONE SLOWLY COMES CLOSER.)

JADE PURE

But what a mighty gift! To understand the speech of birds!

ROAD WANDERER

Of all animals! I shall tell you more when you descend. But come, a guard may pass by soon.

JADE PURE

Yes, yes, I shall try to climb down if you will help me, but--wait--

ROAD WANDERER

For what?

JADE PURE

(ASIDE, ADJUSTING HER VEIL.) My veil--I first must veil my face, so that he will not be frightened.

ROAD WANDERER

What? I cannot hear you.

JADE PURE

Now--now I am ready. (THRUSTING A FOOT FORWARD, TIMIDLY, DRAWING IT BACK.) But afraid!

ROAD WANDERER

Have no fear. Just give me your hand, and I will catch you--so! (HE HELPS JADE PURE STEP DOWN FROM THE TABLE.)

JADE PURE

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT CENTER, IN DELIGHT.) Oh--oh, I am free, and here, outside!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING LEFT CENTER.) Remove your veil so that you may better see the world.

JADE PURE

No, no, I cannot! Do not ask me-- (SMALL ONE MAKES A FRIENDLY BOUND DOWN CENTER TOWARD JADE PURE. SHE SCREAMS AND RUSHES TO ROAD WANDERER.) Oohh!

ROAD WANDERER

Hush! You will call the guards!

JADE PURE

Behind you--

ROAD WANDERER

(LAUGHING) That is only Small One, my dragon. He is gentle, and a friend.

JADE PURE

(CROSSES TO SMALL ONE, TIMIDLY TOUCHES HIS HEAD. HE MAKES FRIENDLY NOISES. ROAD WANDERER COUNTERS LEFT.) Why, yes, he is! I am not afraid of him. I am not afraid of anything!

ROAD WANDERER

(HOLDING HIS HAND OUT TO HER AND STARTING OUT LEFT.) Come along. I know a nearby field, if it is flowers you want to see--

JADE PURE

And trees--and streams of clear, calm water!

ROAD WANDERER

All that. Take my hand and come!

JADE PURE

(CROSSES TO HIM, TAKES HIS HAND. THEY EXIT LEFT.) Yes, yes! (SMALL ONE SKIPS ABOUT PLAYFULLY AT CENTER FOR A MOMENT, THEN, REALIZING HE HAS BEEN LEFT BEHIND, DASHES OFF WITH A HOWL. THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO TABLE AND DRAGS IT TO UP LEFT AGAINST THE WALL, THEN CROSSES TO BENCH AND DRAGS IT TO EXTREME LEFT. HE IS RUSHING. MUSIC IN.)

Act I, Scene 4

(PROPERTY MAN ENTERS WITH BLUE CLOTH, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, SPREADS CLOTH ON FLOOR, CROSSES BACK TO EXTREME LEFT, VERY TIRED FROM ALL THE RUSHING AROUND. HE SHUFFLES. THE STAGE MANAGER CROSSES FROM EXTREME RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT.)

STAGE MANAGER

And so our hero and our heroine run off to find a grassy meadow. (WITH A SWEEPING GESTURE.) That is it. Here is a tree--and there, flowers--here a pool of fresh spring water. (HE INDICATES THE BLUE CLOTH. HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. JADE PURE AND ROAD WANDERER ENTER LEFT. SHE BREAKS AWAY AND RUNS ABOUT LIKE A CHILD IN HER JOY. MUSIC OUT.)

JADE PURE

It is more beautiful than I dreamed! I want to see and hear and touch everything at once! (STOOPING TO PLUCK AN IMAGINARY FLOWER DOWN CENTER, THEN WHIRLING ABOUT.) What a lovely flower! Just see that small white cloud shaped like a fish! (INDICATING AN IMAGINARY TREE.) And this slim tree whose fragrant blossoms--oh! (CROSSING LEFT CENTER.) You are laughing at me!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER. GENTLY.) I am laughing with you, because you are so happy. See, even Small One laughs! (SMALL ONE HAS ENTERED FROM LEFT, AND CAPERS ABOUT CENTER, ROARING HAPPILY. HE STOPS CENTER AND STAYS THERE WATCHING.)

JADE PURE

(SUDDENLY SERIOUS.) Happy--that is so. I am happy! I have never been happy before.

ROAD WANDERER

(STRETCHING OUT HIS HAND.) Take off your veil now.

JADE PURE

(COVERING HER FACE WITH HER HANDS.) No, no!

ROAD WANDERER

Why--what have I said to grieve you?

JADE PURE

(BREAKING AWAY AND CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER.) Nothing. You are kind. I shall be ever grateful. Look--is that a pool of water?

ROAD WANDERER

Yes. As clear as crystal. Drink from it if you like.

JADE PURE

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO BLUE CLOTH. SOFTLY.) A pool that is very like a mirror--I may see my face. (TO HIM.) Please, will you be so kind as to stand over there? (INDICATES STAGE LEFT.)

ROAD WANDERER

There? Why should I?

JADE PURE

I--I cannot tell you yet. But please, stand there--away from me, and do not look in this direction.

ROAD WANDERER

(PUZZLED. CROSSES DOWN LEFT.) If you wish it.

JADE PURE

(KNEELING BESIDE IMAGINARY POOL.) Now--I shall remove my veil and look! Oh, no--I am afraid! But I have said I was afraid of nothing. This must be the test. (SLOWLY.) And so--I lift my veil. (SHE STARES FOR A MOMENT INTO THE WATER, SPEECHLESS.) Why--why, can my eyes be trusted? I am--I am-- (CALLING.) Road Wanderer! Road Wanderer!

ROAD WANDERER

(HURRIES TO HER, HELPS HER TO HER FEET.) What is it? What have you found?

JADE PURE

I have found myself! Tell me, is my face displeasing to you?

ROAD WANDERER

(DAZED.) Why--you are beautiful! More beautiful than any maiden I have ever looked upon!

JADE PURE

Oh, thank you!

ROAD WANDERER

I am speechless--I can find no words. Forgive me.

JADE PURE

I am in your debt forever. You have given me this new face!

ROAD WANDERER

I?

JADE PURE

How am I to repay you? Anything you ask-- (BELLS ARE RUNG EXCITEDLY OFFSTAGE. JADE PURE CROSSES TO CENTER, TURNS.) Those bells! What can have happened?

ROAD WANDERER

Does it matter? They are ringing in the city.

JADE PURE

But you do not understand! They ring only when some disaster befalls the royal family!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING CENTER.) And I still ask you, does it matter now?

JADE PURE

It does to me! What can it be? We must go back at once!

ROAD WANDERER

To the city?

JADE PURE

Yes! (CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER.) Please hurry!

ROAD WANDERER

But I--

JADE PURE

(IMPERIOUSLY.) Come! (SHE EXITS LEFT. ROAD WANDERER SHRUGS AND CROSSES TO LEFT, PASSING SMALL ONE, WHO PROTESTS. ROAD WANDERER TURNS BACK AND TAKES ONE OF THE DRAGON'S PAWS, AND THEY EXIT LEFT. THE PROPERTY MAN CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO THE BLUE CLOTH, STARTS TO ROLL IT UP NEATLY, PAUSES, THEN GRABS UP THE CLOTH AND CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT. MUSIC IN. MUSIC OUT AFTER STAGE MANAGER SPEAKS.)

Act I, Scene 5

STAGE MANAGER

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT, SPEAKING TO THE AUDIENCE.) Our scene is changing once again. I stand now on a city street. But where are the illustrious citizens? (INDICATES AUDIENCE.) Oh, there they are, crowding around that city official who is about to read a Royal Proclamation. (CROSSES TO HIS SEAT EXTREME RIGHT. THE BELLS RING AGAIN. THERE IS THE SOUND OF VOICES OFFSTAGE RIGHT. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN BACKS ON FROM RIGHT, AS IF ON THE FRINGE OF AN IMAGINARY CROWD. HE CONTINUES TO LOOK OFFSTAGE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Here! Cease shoving! And back and back they push me, to the edge of the crowd! (CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER.) This city life does not agree with me! Why have my sisters sent such an urgent message bidding me to come? There is something queer about all this. But before I go to the palace, I shall learn why the bells ring, and what that city official has to say.

JADE PURE

(ENTERING LEFT, RUNNING. CROSSES TO CENTER.) What is it? Have they shouted it yet? Oh, good sir, can you tell us? (ROAD WANDERER ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

I? I do not-- (JADE PURE CROSSES TO RIGHT. TWENTY-FOURTH NOTICES ROAD WANDERER, CROSSES TO HIM.) Why, it is my friend, Road Wanderer!

ROAD WANDERER

(STILL CONCERNED ABOUT JADE PURE'S CONDUCT.) My respects to you. (GONG.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Many thanks! And this--this must be the lovely prisoner. (GUARD ENTERS FROM RIGHT, CROSSES TO RIGHT STAGE, READS TO AUDIENCE.)

JADE PURE

Why were the bells rung? Why?

GUARD

(READING FROM SCROLL.) Royal Proclamation--

JADE PURE

Listen, listen!

GUARD

"Know, subjects of the Southern Kingdom, that your princess, Her Highness, Jade Pure, has mysteriously vanished away, no doubt carried off by the evil demons. (THERE ARE MURMURS AND EXCLAMATIONS OF SURPRISE FROM OFFSTAGE.)

JADE PURE

(ANGRILY.) Demons!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Think of that!

GUARD

Silence! "Her aunt, the Lady Precious Harp, sister of the late Emperor, has therefore graciously consented to ascend the throne and to assume the title of Empress." (THERE ARE FEEBLE CHEERS AND BOOS OFFSTAGE.)

JADE PURE

(STAMPING HER FOOT.) No! No, no, no!

ROAD WANDERER

(CROSSING TO HER, RIGHT CENTER.) What is wrong?

JADE PURE

(TURNING TO HIM.) She shall do no such thing! I, Princess Jade Pure, am very much alive!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Princess Jade Pure!

ROAD WANDERER

You--a princess?

TWENTY-FOURTH

But you are--you are--

JADE PURE

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER, TALKING TO AUDIENCE.) Subjects, my aunt would have you believe that I am ugly. Now you see for yourselves that I am beautiful. (HOLDING HER HAND OUT IMPERIOUSLY.) See--the royal ring upon my right hand. Bow before your Princess!

(TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN BOWS LOW. ROAD WANDERER, COMPLETELY IGNORED BY JADE PURE, WHOSE BACK IS TO HIM, STANDS STRAIGHT AND STIFF.)

JADE PURE

Ring the bells joyously to announce my return! Let Lady Precious Harp know that her plot has failed. (TO TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN.) For I am beautiful, am I not?

TWENTY-FOURTH

(OVERCOME, STILL BOWING.) Yes, indeed, Your Highness--yes!

JADE PURE

(CROSSING TO ROAD WANDERER, RIGHT CENTER.) Am I not beautiful?

ROAD WANDERER

(COLDLY.) Yes, Your Highness.

JADE PURE

(WHIRLING ABOUT, ENCHANTED WITH HER TRIUMPH.) Thank you, my good fellow! My very good fellow! (ROAD WANDERER TURNS WITH AN EXCLAMATION OF ANGER, CROSSES LEFT.) Why--where are you going?

ROAD WANDERER

(PAUSING.) To resume my wandering. I have already stayed too long here.

JADE PURE

But I thought--that is--

ROAD WANDERER

(BITTERLY.) A Princess! More than that, you are a thoughtless and ungrateful girl!

JADE PURE

How dare you!

ROAD WANDERER

You seek new admirers and forget me!

JADE PURE

Oh!

TWENTY-FOURTH

My friend--

ROAD WANDERER

Eternal gratitude! Your beauty and your throne are all that interest you! You shall not make sport of me a second time. (HE STALKS OFF ANGRILY, EXITING LEFT. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN IS AGHAST. JADE PURE SUDDENLY BECOMES AWARE OF HER FEELINGS TOWARD HIM.)

JADE PURE

(RUNNING TO CENTER AND CALLING.) Wait, please! Do come back! (PAUSE.) What does it matter now! I have lost Road Wanderer! (WEEPING SLEEVE. EXITS RIGHT, WEEPING. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN, SHAKING HIS HEAD SORROWFULLY, EXITS LEFT. MUSIC IN.)

Act I, Scene 6

STAGE MANAGER

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT, SPEAKING TO AUDIENCE.) Yes, it is indeed an unhappy moment for the beautiful Jade Pure. (DOES WEEPING SLEEVE.) But do not weep too hard, kind audience, for our play has a joyful ending. Others are unhappy in the Royal Palace too. Here in this room, we find the three deceitful Cousins. (HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. MUSIC OUT.)

(TWENTY-FIRST, TWENTY-SECOND, AND TWENTY-THIRD COUSINS SAIL IN, WRINGING THEIR HANDS IN DESPAIR. THEY ENTER UP RIGHT IN A ROW, MAKE A SWEEPING CROSS RIGHT STAGE AND THEN LEFT STAGE, WHERE THEY CRASH INTO EACH OTHER WHEN TWENTY-FIRST STOPS SUDDENLY. TWENTY-FIRST HITS TWENTY-SECOND WITH HER FAN, TWENTY-SECOND HITS TWENTY-THIRD, WHO TURNS TO HIT AND FINDS NO ONE THERE. REACTS.)

TWENTY-FIRST

What a dreadful calamity!

TWENTY-SECOND

All is lost!

TWENTY-THIRD

O unhappy day!

TWENTY-FIRST

We should have watched her every minute!

TWENTY-SECOND

Now all know of Jade Pure's beauty!

TWENTY-THIRD

Suitors are arriving by the dozens! She can marry if she likes this very day!

TWENTY-FIRST

And Twenty-Fourth Cousin-- (STOPS SUDDENLY.) no, there is no hope.

TWENTY-SECOND

Shall he not still be a suitor?

TWENTY-FIRST

Have you seen those who have come? (PACING BACK AND FORTH FROM DOWN RIGHT TO CENTER AND BACK.) Kings, princes, nobles of every rank and degree! With unbelievable wealth! Handsome and young and elegant! And our brother--pah! (PAUSES IN PACING.)

TWENTY-THIRD

Alas!

TWENTY-SECOND

But you have sent for him, and he will come.

TWENTY-FIRST

(PACING AGAIN.) Then he must go away again. (TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN ENTERS FROM LEFT TIMIDLY, CROSSES TO LEFT STAGE, TRIES TO NERVE HIMSELF TO RAP AT AN IMAGINARY DOOR.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Do not be hasty, sister. (A KNOCK IS SOUNDED BY PROPERTY MAN.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Hear! A knock--it must be he. Let him in, but quietly. (SHE CROSSES TO TWENTY-THIRD, PUSHES HER GENTLY.)

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSING TO LEFT, OPENING AN IMAGINARY DOOR.) Come in. (TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN, CLUTCHING HIS HAT, HESITATES AND CLEARS HIS THROAT.) Come in, quickly. (SHE PULLS HIM INSIDE BY HIS SLEEVE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Thank you, gracious lady. I--I am looking for my--

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Brother, can you fail to know us?

TWENTY-FOURTH

What! Those robes, this splendor--are you my three sisters?

TWENTY-FIRST

Of course. Do not speak so loudly.

TWENTY-SECOND

You have had your trip in vain, it seems. (CROSSING TO RIGHT OF TWENTY-FIRST.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Oh? How is that? Why did you send for me?

TWENTY-THIRD

You were to marry the Princess!

TWENTY-FOURTH

I--what?

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.) When it was thought that she was ugly, there were no suitors for her hand. You, brother, as the only prince to ask her hand, would win it.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(HIS EYES WIDER THAN EVER.) A prince! But I am not a prince!

TWENTY-SECOND

With handsome robes and borrowed jewels you might have posed--

TWENTY-FIRST

(IMPATIENTLY.) Enough! Her suitors throng the halls. Such a one as you can stand no chance. (SHE CROSSES TO TWENTY-FOURTH AND PULLS HIM DOWN CENTER.) Just see his shape! It is not regal!

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER. PULLS AT TWENTY-FOURTH. HE TRIPS, FALLS IN A SITTING POSITION.) And the nose--in profile very bad!

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER. PULLS HIS QUEUE.) That queue! It is too short. Not even twenty inches!

TWENTY-FIRST

(PICKING UP HIS FOOT.) Such feet! So large and flat! The feet of a prince are dainty.

TWENTY-SECOND

(TAKING HIS HAND AND HOLDING IT UP.) The hands show callouses and stains, the marks of work!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(FEEBLY.) I am a farmer, sisters!

TWENTY-THIRD

(JUST REALIZING IT.) Without a fan he comes here to the palace! (THEY ARE SHOCKED.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Yes, without a fan!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT. TURNS HER BACK ON HIM AND FOLDS HER ARMS.) Begone! We have no use for you.

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSES TO CENTER. DOES THE SAME.) Begone!

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSES TO LEFT. DOES THE SAME.) Begone!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Sisters, I--I--

COUSINS

(TURNING AT THE SAME TIME, EACH EXTENDING AN ARM STIFFLY TOWARD THE DOOR LEFT.) Begone!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(RISES, BOWS, BACKS UP TO WHERE IMAGINARY DOOR IS AT LEFT, PANTOMIMES OPENING DOOR, STEPPING OVER THRESHOLD AND CLOSING DOOR.) I take my leave. Good day, my sisters. (EXITS LEFT. LADY PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING ENTER FROM UP LEFT AND CROSS TO UP CENTER. THEY PAUSE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Aha! (THE COUSINS ARE STARTLED, TURN QUICKLY, THEN BOW.) So there you are! Stupid creatures! (CROSSING TO CENTER. COVET SPRING CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER.) Have you left the Princess unattended again?

TWENTY-FIRST

(RAISING HER HEAD TO SPEAK, THEN DOWN AGAIN.) Only for one small moment, Your Ladyship.

TWENTY-SECOND

(RAISING HEAD, DOWN.) But not alone. She was occupied in interviewing suitors.

TWENTY-THIRD

(RAISING HEAD, DOWN.) Some of the many who came. (MALICIOUSLY.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(SOURLY.) Ah, yes.

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER. SWEETLY.) Her ladyship is doubtless overjoyed at the numbers of young men who have proposed.

TWENTY-SECOND

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) The Princess soon will marry.

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) And dear Lady Precious Harp need not assume the cares of state!

PRECIOUS HARP

Silence!

COVET SPRING

(RUNNING AROUND PRECIOUS HARP ON HER LEFT, HE COMES DOWN STAGE AND SHOOS OUT THE COUSINS.) Impudent servants! Be gone at once!

PRECIOUS HARP

Attend your mistress!

COVET SPRING

Leave us!

COUSINS

(BOWING AND BUMPING INTO EACH OTHER, THEY EXIT UP RIGHT IN DISORDER.)
Yes, Your Ladyship--Your Excellency.

(COVET SPRING ENDS AT LEFT CENTER. PRECIOUS HARP CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER. THEY BEGIN TO PACE FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE, PASSING AND REPASSING EACH OTHER CENTER STAGE.)

COVET SPRING

So! All is lost! Spilt water cannot be gathered up.

PRECIOUS HARP

Those simpering bunglers shall pay dearly for the failure of our plan.
If Jade Pure had been guarded every moment--ah!

COVET SPRING

Alas! All know her beauty now. And she will marry. You have lost the throne!

PRECIOUS HARP

(STOPPING SUDDENLY.) Not yet! Her birthday comes within the week.

COVET SPRING

(ALSO STOPPING.) That is so. That is quite so.

PRECIOUS HARP

The stroke of noon that marks her eighteenth birthday still may find her single. No suitor seems to please her.

COVET SPRING

(BEGINNING TO PACE AGAIN.) But she will wed, if just to spite you.
Mark my words!

PRECIOUS HARP

I am not beaten! Come! (SHE CROSSES TO COVET SPRING, GRABS HIS ARM, PULLING HIM OFF BALANCE. THEY EXIT UP LEFT.) Come, I say. We shall lay new and better plans! (MUSIC IN.)

Act I, Scene 7

STAGE MANAGER

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Again we change our scene, this time going outside into the Royal Garden. The day is warm and clear. Butterflies come to light upon fragrant lilies. Everything about us is bright and beautiful. But the fair Princess who approaches has no welcoming smile. (MUSIC OUT. HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. JADE PURE ENTERS RIGHT, RUNNING. PAUSES. SHE IS PROTESTING TO SOMEONE OFFSTAGE. CROWD NOISE.)

JADE PURE

No, no. Leave me, I beg of you. Guards, hold them back! (CROSSING SLOWLY TO CENTER.) I am weary of suitors, and would be alone to rest and think. Let me wander through the garden paths--perhaps to sit a moment on this bench. (LOOKS AROUND FOR BENCH, WHICH IS NOT THERE. THE PROPERTY MAN HASTILY CROSSES FROM EXTREME LEFT WITH BENCH, WHICH HE PLACES AT LEFT CENTER. JADE PURE SITS. PROPERTY MAN EXITS UP LEFT.) Strange--I am still lonely. Beauty is not happiness. What good are suitors if Road Wanderer be not among them? (VOICES OFFSTAGE.) Voices--who has followed me here? Ah, the Cousins--whom I can no longer trust. (THE THREE COUSINS ENTER RIGHT, IN A LINE, AND CROSS TO RIGHT CENTER.)

TWENTY-FIRST

My Princess, fairer than a day in spring-- (BOWING.)

TWENTY-SECOND

(BOWING.) More lovely than fragile flowers.

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOWING.) Whose voice is sweeter yet than the nightingale's song--

JADE PURE

Stop! I have heard enough! What do you want of me?

TWENTY-FIRST

Nothing but to serve you, regal cousin, who is now the happiest of mortals.

JADE PURE

Ah!

TWENTY-FIRST

What? She sighs?

TWENTY-SECOND

She comes to sit alone.

TWENTY-THIRD

Do not her suitors please her?

JADE PURE

No! I have dismissed them, everyone who came today.

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) But your marriage--

JADE PURE

It shall not take place, unless the right one comes.

TWENTY-SECOND

(ASIDE TO THE OTHERS.) Good! She has chosen no one yet.

TWENTY-THIRD

Perhaps our brother should return!

TWENTY-FIRST

(PROPERTY MAN ENTERS UP RIGHT, CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER. HE CARRIES A PARCHMENT AND BRUSH. TWENTY-FIRST CROSSES TO HER SISTERS.) Wait--I shall question her about the man of her choice. Now mark down what she answers. (CROSSING LEFT CENTER TO JADE PURE, BEHIND BENCH TO LEFT OF BENCH. KNEELS.) Sweet Princess, tell us of the man you wait for. First, of what height should he be?

(PROPERTY MAN HANDS BRUSH AND PARCHMENT TO TWENTY-SECOND COUSIN, AND REMAINS SLIGHTLY UPSTAGE OF THE COUSINS, HOLDING AN INKWELL. TWENTY-THIRD COUSIN BENDS OVER, FORMING A "TABLE," ON WHICH TWENTY-SECOND PLACES THE PARCHMENT. TWENTY-SECOND REPEATEDLY TAKES A FEW STEPS TO CENTER, LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION OF JADE PURE AND TWENTY-FIRST, THEN RUNS BACK TO WRITE IT DOWN WITH A FLOURISH.)

JADE PURE

(REMEMBERING.) Why, half a head as tall as I.

TWENTY-SECOND

(MARKING WITH THE BRUSH ON THE PARCHMENT.) Our brother must stoop over!

TWENTY-THIRD

(BENT OVER.) Or walk on his knees!

TWENTY-FIRST

His hair next--of what color should it be?

JADE PURE

Black as a raven's wing, and long.

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOBBING UP. TWENTY-SECOND PUSHES HER BACK DOWN.) Very long and black!

TWENTY-FIRST

And features?

JADE PURE

Beautiful eyes, a fine straight nose--

TWENTY-SECOND

Alas, his nose! What can be done with it?

JADE PURE

Delightful smile, and such a voice!

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOBBING UP.) Aha! Our brother has a voice! (IS PUSHED DOWN.)

TWENTY-SECOND

(DESPAIRINGLY.) But such a voice!

TWENTY-FIRST

What else? What qualities of mind?

JADE PURE

Why, he must know how to be gay--

TWENTY-SECOND

Brother shall laugh ho-ho at all he hears.

JADE PURE

And must love nature and all animals--

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOBBING UP.) Ah, good! A farmer can do that! (IS PUSHED DOWN.)

JADE PURE

(DREAMILY.) All animals, and dragons too--such a sweet small dragon he had!

TWENTY-FIRST

(MISUNDERSTANDING.) What? He must have a dragon?

TWENTY-SECOND

Impossible! What man can bring a dragon to you?

JADE PURE

(THOUGHTFULLY.) What man indeed!

TWENTY-THIRD

(BOBBING UP AND STAYING UP.) Ridiculous!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER TO CONFER WITH HER SISTERS.) Why, sisters--
(PROPERTY MAN, WHO HAS BEEN YAWNING AND APPEARING BORED, EXITS UP RIGHT
WITH THE PARCHMENT, BRUSH, AND INKWELL.)

JADE PURE

(RISING, DELIGHTED.) Of course! Possession of a dragon! Who but my dear Road Wanderer can meet such a requirement. I must send decrees throughout the kingdom.

TWENTY-FIRST

(TURNING TO JADE PURE.) Surely Your Highness cannot mean--

TWENTY-SECOND

A dragon!

JADE PURE

I do indeed.

TWENTY-THIRD

Dragons! Pah!

PRECIOUS HARP

(ENTERING LEFT, FOLLOWED BY COVET SPRING. THEY CROSS TO LEFT CENTER.)
What is this? What do I hear?

COVET SPRING

(HIDING BEHIND PRECIOUS HARP AND PEEPING OUT.) Dragons? Dragons?
W-where?

JADE PURE

(GAILY.) My respects to Her Ladyship and His Excellency.

PRECIOUS HARP

Do not stand on ceremony, niece, but tell us--what has caused this uproar?

JADE PURE

Most venerable aunt, I have come to a decision about my marriage.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CAUGHT OFF GUARD. GRABS COVET SPRING.) Oh, no!

JADE PURE

(CLIMBS UP ON BENCH. THE COUSINS MOVE IN A LITTLE TOWARD CENTER.) Let
a proclamation be cried throughout the land.

COVET SPRING

Too late, too late!

JADE PURE

And this is my royal decision--the suitor who wins my hand must possess
a dragon.

PRECIOUS HARP

Why--

COVET SPRING

Why--

JADE PURE

That is my only condition. The dragon must, of course, be brought before me by its owner.

PRECIOUS HARP

But this will simply mean--

COVET SPRING

Do I understand--

TWENTY-FIRST

How can a--

JADE PURE

Just one thing more! If two dragon owners should appear, it shall be my privilege to select whichever dragon pleases me most. (SHE GETS OFF BENCH, CROSSES CENTER. THE TWO GROUPS REACT WITHIN THE GROUPS.)

COVET SPRING

Why, I cannot believe--

PRECIOUS HARP

She is mad! How fortunate for us!

JADE PURE

(ASIDE SLEEVE.) Surely Road Wanderer will hear of my decision and come back to me!

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING TO JADE PURE. SLYLY.) But, see here, niece, what if no dragon owner appears?

JADE PURE

(CALMLY.) Then I shall marry no one.

PRECIOUS HARP

Splendid! Er--that is--

JADE PURE

But have no fear upon that score. (CROSSING TO BENCH. SITS.) At least one dragon will be entered.

(PRECIOUS HARP CROSSES TO COVET SPRING LEFT. COUSINS GROUP AT RIGHT CENTER. EACH GROUP TALKS IN A HUDDLE. ALL CARRY FANS. EACH GROUP FINISHES ITS SECTION OF DIALOGUE, FREEZES BEHIND ITS FANS, WHILE THE OTHER GROUP TALKS. THIS CONTINUES UNTIL THE EXIT.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(TO HER SISTERS.) How can she be so certain?

COVET SPRING

(TO PRECIOUS HARP.) This is perfect! She will never marry with such a requirement.

PRECIOUS HARP

I wonder. (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Does our brother own a dragon, do you think?

TWENTY-FIRST

Nonsense!

TWENTY-THIRD

There will be no suitors left once this decree is read. (FREEZE.)

COVET SPRING

We need only wait until her birthday comes and goes.

PRECIOUS HARP

(LOOKING AT JADE PURE.) But see how she smiles--she does not fear the outcome. Why not? Does she know of a dragon? (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.) There must be a dragon somewhere. If our brother could present it--

TWENTY-SECOND

(LOOKING AT JADE PURE, THEN CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.) See how the Princess smiles. She knows--

TWENTY-THIRD

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT. HUDDLE.) Knows what? (FREEZE.)

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT. TURNS.) She must know something. If there is a dragon, we have lost again. "Out of the wolf's den into the tiger's mouth!"

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT.) Listen to me. Our course is plain. We must enter a dragon too! (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(COUSINS KNEEL.) Yes, there can be no other way. We must discover a dragon at once!

TWENTY-SECOND

But where?

TWENTY-THIRD

They are surely all dead! (FREEZE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Do you know where to find such a thing?

COVET SPRING

Ah, that is the problem. A live dragon--

PRECIOUS HARP

Do you suppose--ah, but it might not work-- (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

A live dragon! It is true we may not find--I wonder!

TWENTY-SECOND

What?

TWENTY-THIRD

Have you a plan? (FREEZE.)

COVET SPRING

What thought has come to you?

PRECIOUS HARP

Need it be a live dragon?

COVET SPRING

But--I see! I see! (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Why not a make-believe dragon?

TWENTY-SECOND

Oh!

TWENTY-THIRD

Of course! Of course! (FREEZE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT CENTER. TURNS.) We must find someone whom we can trust to wear a dragon costume.

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO PRECIOUS HARP.) Good! And I shall seek the Princess' hand!

PRECIOUS HARP

You?

COVET SPRING

Of course! And you shall play the dragon! (FREEZE, A LOOK OF HORROR ON THE FACE OF PRECIOUS HARP.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(JUMPING UP.) I have it! (INDICATING BOTH OF THEM.) You shall play the dragon! (FREEZE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Preposterous! (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Not I, sister!

TWENTY-THIRD

Nor I!

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING AROUND PRECIOUS HARP TO HER RIGHT, COAXING HER.) But think, Your Ladyship! The plot is dangerous at best. We two must work it out alone. (FREEZE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

You must! We have no choice!

TWENTY-SECOND

But why not you?

TWENTY-FIRST

I must coach our brother, and prepare his speeches for him. (FREEZE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

But I--a dragon!

COVET SPRING

There is much to gain--a throne!

PRECIOUS HARP

Then if you win Jade Pure, she must be done away with.

COVET SPRING

Agreed! And you shall be my Empress. (CROSSES FEW STEPS DOWN, ASIDE WITH FAN.) And the next to die.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSES A FEW STEPS DOWN. ASIDE SLEEVE.) He shall not live long after.

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER.) Come, let us go to find a costume that you two may don.

TWENTY-SECOND

But the Princess?

TWENTY-FIRST

She is dreaming, and will take no notice.

PRECIOUS HARP

Ugh! A dragon! But it must be so. (CROSSING UP CENTER.) Come now, a costume must be made at once.

GOVET SPRING

The Princess?

PRECIOUS HARP

Leave her to her dreams. We go to find a dragon! (THEY EXIT UP RIGHT.)

TWENTY-THIRD

(TIPTOES CENTER AND LOOKS AT JADE PURE.) Yes, her thoughts are far away.

TWENTY-FIRST

Twenty-Fourth Cousin must be sent for too. But first, we go to find a dragon! (THEY EXIT UP LEFT. JADE PURE, WHO HAS BEEN OBLIVIOUS TO THE CONVERSATIONS, NOW STIRS AND SIGHS HAPPILY.)

JADE PURE

Of course! The dragon was the answer. Who but Road Wanderer can bring one to me? (RISES, CROSSES CENTER.) Yes, he will return--I feel it--and my happiness with him. I go now to fold my hands and wait--for the coming of my dragon! (SHE EXITS RIGHT. THE PROPERTY MAN ENTERS FROM UP RIGHT AND REMOVES BENCH TO EXTREME LEFT. THE STAGE MANAGER ENTERS FROM EXTREME RIGHT, CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

STAGE MANAGER

Thus ends the first act of our worthy play, must gracious audience. The noble actors will now rest a moment and sip their tea. But have patience; they will soon return. And that your wait may be more pleasant, (CLAPPING HIS HANDS.) Music shall be played. (MUSIC IN.)

(STAGE MANAGER BOWS AND CROSSES TO HIS SEAT EXTREME RIGHT, WHERE HE STANDS WAITING DURING THE SHORT BREAK. THERE IS NO INTERMISSION. CHINESE MUSIC, RECORDED, IS PLAYED THROUGHOUT THE BREAK. THE PROPERTY MAN STANDS BY HIS SEAT EXTREME LEFT, READY TO STRIKE THE GONG ON CUE. LIGHTS REMAIN THE SAME, AND THE HOUSE LIGHTS DO NOT GO ON.)

Act II, Scene 1

(THE PROPERTY MAN STRIKES THE LARGE GONG. THE STAGE MANAGER CROSSES DOWN CENTER, BOWS, AND SPEAKS TO THE AUDIENCE.)

STAGE MANAGER

Again, our greetings, O most gracious audience! We thank you for your kind attention thus far, and promise you much laughter and excitement in what follows. The stage is now a lonely field far from the palace. (LOOKING OFFSTAGE.) But the worthy actors are approaching. I once more become invisible. (HE BOWS AGAIN AND CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. MUSIC OUT. COVET SPRING TIPTOES CAUTIOUSLY IN FROM LEFT, CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER, LOOKS BACK OFFSTAGE, AND BECKONS.)

COVET SPRING

Hsst! We are alone, Your Ladyship.

PRECIOUS HARP

(ENTERING LEFT IN DRAGON COSTUME, PUFFING AND GROANING. CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER. COVET SPRING CROSSES CENTER, LOOKING AROUND, AS SHE ENTERS. HE PRANCES AROUND DELIGHTEDLY DOWN CENTER.) Alas! O woe! That I should come to this! Ancestors, have mercy!

COVET SPRING

Yes, this is a place where none will spy us out. And you, Your Ladyship, may practice both your walk and roar.

PRECIOUS HARP

No, no, Covet Spring! This is too much! My senses must have left me when I gave consent!

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO HER.) But, my dear Precious Harp, how else can we obtain the throne? It is a prize worth any risk!

PRECIOUS HARP

But, oh, the shame--the gross indignity of Precious Harp impersonating a dragon!

COVET SPRING

(CIRCLING HER AND ENDING ON HER LEFT. SMOOTHLY.) Her Ladyship cannot appreciate the beauty of the costume and the brilliance of her own portrayal half so well as I. You are a dragon beyond all others, I assure you! Come now, roar again, and let me see that graceful walk.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER.) Alas! But if it must be so, it must. (SHE ATTEMPTS A FEEBLE ROAR.)

COVET SPRING

A-ha! Good, good! But if Her Ladyship could roar somewhat more loudly-- (HE ROARS VIGOROUSLY, FRIGHTENING HER.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(LEAPING AWAY IN FRIGHT.) Covet Spring! How dare you? But it was a most impressive roar--I shall try one--now then-- (SHE ROARS SLIGHTLY LOUDER THAN BEFORE.)

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO PRECIOUS HARP DOWN CENTER.) Ah, good! Better! Yes, much better! Now, the walk. I lead you--so, with this gold chain, and we approach Jade Pure. (TAKES CHAIN THAT IS AROUND PRECIOUS HARP'S NECK. THEY CIRCLE THE STAGE CLOCKWISE RATHER RAPIDLY, PRECIOUS HARP GRUNTING AND GASPING, RESEMBLING AN UNWILLING DOG AT THE END OF A LEASH. THEY STOP DOWN LEFT CENTER.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Ugh! Stay--you move too swiftly--stop, I say!

COVET SPRING

(STOPPING.) A thousand pardons! You are right; a stately pace will give us dignity. As we walk, a roar or two might add--

PRECIOUS HARP

A roar! Ugh--oh--my breath is all but stopped!

COVET SPRING

And when we reach the throne, we both shall bow, and I shall make my speech.

PRECIOUS HARP

(AS HE BEGINS TO PULL HER ALONG.) Wait! Let us practice singly, you your speech, and I my roars. Ah, what a sorry business!

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) Very well, I shall go over here. (THEY STAND ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE, FACING THE AUDIENCE.)

COVET SPRING

Princess Jade Pure, (PRECIOUS HARP ROARS.) I come before you (ROAR.) not as your Chancellor today, (ROAR, COVET SPRING GRIMACES.) but as a suitor with a dragon. (ANOTHER ROAR. COVET SPRING GLARES. SUDDENLY PRECIOUS HARP BEGINS TO COUGH AND CHOKE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Eh--oh! I shall choke! Covet Spring--

COVET SPRING

(RUNS TO HER AND TRIES HELPLESSLY TO THUMP HER ON THE BACK.) What is it? How am I to--

PRECIOUS HARP

Oh, my throat! It is dry as dust, and rough with roaring! I can stand no more!

COVET SPRING

(TAKING HER ARM.) Let us find a brook where we may quench our thirst. There will be time to practice later.

PRECIOUS HARP

Yes, yes! I shall lose this hateful dragon's head with pleasure! (THEY EXIT LEFT, WITH COVET SPRING COMICALLY GUIDING PRECIOUS HARP. SHE TUGS AT THE DRAGON HEAD. TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN AND TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN ENTER UP LEFT AND CROSS TO UP CENTER. HE IS NOW COSTUMED IN A GORGEOUS ROBE AND CARRIES AN ENORMOUS FAN. HE LOOKS, AND IS, EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Yes, this field will do quite well. We shall have space to practice. Our two sisters are now putting on the costume.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(JERKING AT HIS ROBES AND HEADDRESS.) But-but, I tell you, I protest again--all this is not what I should like to--

TWENTY-FIRST

Oh, be still! And do not twitch about so! Hold your fan like this. (SHOWS HIM WITH HER FAN.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

But I never wanted to hold a fan at all! I want to get back to my farm. Why have you brought me here?

TWENTY-FIRST

(FORCIBLY READJUSTING HIS ROBE.) You know why, stupid one!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(AS SHE JAMS HIS HEADDRESS DOWN AT A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT ANGLE.) Ouch!
Be merciful, sister!

TWENTY-FIRST

What shall I do with you? Nothing is right--nothing! Turn your toes out--out, I say! Let me see you walk. (HE CROSSES TO CENTER WITH LARGE AWKWARD STRIDES, TOES TURNED OUT.) No, no! Not huge, long strides, but dainty steps! Like this-- (SHE CROSSES TO CENTER WITH DAINY LITTLE STEPS.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER, INTENDING TO LEAVE.) No, sister, I regretfully refuse--

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING AFTER HIM, SEIZING HIM BY THE SHOULDERS AND TURNING HIM TO CENTER. HISSING IN HIS EAR.) You will do as I say, little brother! Now, walk! Walk, do you hear? (HE CROSSES TO RIGHT WITH SHORT AWKWARD STEPS, WATCHING HIS FEET. SHE FOLLOWS.) Your head erect. (PULLING HIS QUEUE FROM BEHIND.) Erect! Nose pointed to the sky! But now you have forgotten the fan--flutter it! Flutter it gracefully! Watch--toes out, small steps-- (THEY MAKE A CURVED CROSS BACK TO CENTER.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(THOROUGHLY BEWILDERED.) I cannot--remember--so many things at one time.

TWENTY-FIRST

You must! Now bow before the Princess.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(STOPPING. BECOMING HIMSELF AGAIN.) The Princess? Where?

TWENTY-FIRST

Not here, idiot of idiots! Bow as you will bow that day before her.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Oh! A bow, you say--I am not sure how--does it go like this? (HE BOWS AWKWARDLY, GLANCING ANXIOUSLY TOWARD TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN.)

(TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD COUSINS INSIDE DRAGON ENTER FROM RIGHT AND STOP.)

TWENTY-FIRST

No, no, no--

TWENTY-FOURTH

(LIFTING HIS HEAD, SEEING DRAGON FOR THE FIRST TIME.) What do I do then--
(TERRIFIED, DASHES TO HIS SISTER, GRABS HER ARM, TRIES TO PULL HER LEFT.)
A d-d-dragon! Look out! Let us flee! Come quickly!

TWENTY-FIRST

Be still! (THE LARGE, AWKWARD-LOOKING DRAGON, OCCUPIED BY THE TWO SISTERS, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER, ROARING FIERCELY.)

TWENTY-SECOND

(GRUFFLY.) We have come, little brother--

TWENTY-THIRD

To eat you!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(RUNNING LEFT.) Farewell!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER.) Come back! These are your sisters in their dragon costume.

TWENTY-FOURTH

My sisters?

TWENTY-FIRST

(AS THE DRAGON DANCES IN PLACE.) Is it not a splendid disguise? So realistic!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(SHUDDERING.) Yes!

TWENTY-FIRST

Come, sisters, walk about a little.

TWENTY-SECOND

(TURNING TO HER LEFT.) Very well.

TWENTY-THIRD

(TURNING TO HER RIGHT.) I shall be happy--eh!

TWENTY-FIRST

What has gone wrong now?

TWENTY-SECOND

Sister, move with me in this direction!

TWENTY-THIRD

(TURNING.) But I cannot see! How can I tell which way to go? (THE DRAGON BEGINS TO TURN IN A CIRCLE COUNTER-CLOCKWISE, BOTH GIRLS EXCLAIMING IN DISMAY.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) No, no! You are moving in a circle!

TWENTY-FOURTH

All this will never work! Never! I want no part of it!

TWENTY-SECOND

Oh, sister, stop! My head is spinning!

TWENTY-THIRD

I am giddy too! Oh! Oh! (BOTH ENDS OF THE DRAGON GO DOWN ABRUPTLY WITH WAILS AND GROANS.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF DRAGON, TUGS AT FRAME, ATTEMPTING TO GET THE BACK END OF THE DRAGON ON ITS FEET.) See here, get on your feet again--heavy creature! Brother--help your other sister! We must try again--a thousand times if need be! A throne depends on it! (TWENTY-FOURTH CROSSES TO THE DRAGON'S HEAD AND TUGS.)

TWENTY-SECOND

No more of this, I beg you!

TWENTY-THIRD

My bones are surely broken, every one!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO THE DRAGON'S HEAD WHEN BOTH GIRLS ARE STANDING AGAIN.)
Enough! Now, brother, stand away. (TWENTY-FOURTH MOVES BACK TO CENTER.)
And, dragon, listen to me carefully. I am here in front of you, younger
sister--

TWENTY-SECOND

(THE FRONT HALF.) Yes, elder sister.

TWENTY-FIRST

You will move as I command you. Youngest sister, you also will follow
my voice.

TWENTY-THIRD

(UNHAPPILY.) Yes, eldest sister.

TWENTY-FIRST

Now, brother! Take hold of the silken cord about the dragon's neck.
(HE CROSSES AND DOES SO.) We are ready at last. March forward--left--
right--left--brother! This one is your left! (INDICATES.) Left--
right--roar now, sisters-- (THE DRAGON STARTS TOWARD LEFT, LED BY
TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN. DRAGON ROARS FEEBLY.) Louder--left--right--
left--roar now! Brother, head back--hold the fan high, and flutter it
in time to left and right and-- (TWENTY-FIRST CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.)

(THE DRAGON AND TWENTY-FOURTH CIRCLE THE STAGE AND NOW CROSS RIGHT, BUT
THEY DO NOT EXIT. TWENTY-FIRST FOLLOWS, STILL COUNTING. AS IF IN
ANSWER TO A ROAR FROM THEIR SIDE OF THE STAGE, A SHRILL ROAR COMES FROM
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. THERE IS A MOMENT OF DEAD SILENCE. COVET
SPRING AND PRECIOUS HARP ENTER LEFT, BACKING ON. SHE WEARS THE DRAGON
COSTUME.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(QUAVERING.) Sister, what was that?

TWENTY-FIRST

Why, I do not know. (ALL START TO BACK UP TOWARD CENTER STAGE.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Yes, I heard it too.

COVET SPRING

What can it be?

TWENTY-FOURTH

(BACKING ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STAGE, WHISPERING.) It sounded very like a--like a dragon!

TWENTY-FIRST

A dragon? Nonsense!

COVET SPRING

Such a fearful sound!

PRECIOUS HARP

We must not be discovered!

TWENTY-FIRST

I see no one!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Let us go away!

COVET SPRING

Hark! Voices!

TWENTY-FIRST

Hush! A voice!

PRECIOUS HARP

Come! Let us slip away!

TWENTY-FIRST

You may be right--it does seem best to leave! But silently--

COVET SPRING

But quietly--sshhh!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Ssshhh!

(THE TWO GROUPS, BACKING SLOWLY AND ELABORATELY ON TIPTOE, MEET CENTER STAGE. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN AND COVET SPRING COLLIDE, AS DO THE TWO DRAGONS. THERE IS GENERAL PANIC, AND THE STAGE IS CLEARED IN A MOMENT. PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING EXIT LEFT, THE COUSINS EXIT RIGHT.)

COUSINS

(DASHING OFF.) Dragon! Dragon!

PRECIOUS AND COVET

(DASHING OFF.) Dragon! Dragon! (A MOMENT OF SILENCE. TWENTY-FIRST ENTERS RIGHT, PULLING TWENTY-FOURTH. THEY CROSS TO RIGHT CENTER CAUTIOUSLY. HE IS EXTREMELY RELUCTANT. THE PROPERTY MAN ENTERS FROM EXTREME LEFT, CROSSES TO CENTER, HOLDS UP STYLIZED BRANCHES TO FORM BUSHES.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Oh, come along! There is no one about. I want to see--

TWENTY-FOURTH

But I--I do not want to see! Ah, what an ill-fated wretch am I, doomed to--

TWENTY-FIRST

Silence! There was something strange about the dragon, I tell you. And I heard a woman's scream, of that I am certain. Here, hold aside these bushes. (TWENTY-FOURTH CROSSES CENTER TO PROPERTY MAN, SPREADS BUSHES APART, THEN STEPS UPSTAGE. TWENTY-FIRST CROSSES TO BUSHES, BENDS TO LOOK THROUGH THEM.) Ah-a!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(JUMPING.) Eh? What do you see?

TWENTY-FIRST

Just as I suspected! That dragon was no dragon at all!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Not a dragon?

TWENTY-FIRST

I see Precious Harp, Her August Ladyship, even now stepping out of the disguise.

TWENTY-FOURTH

(STILL DAZED.) Disguise?

TWENTY-FIRST

(STRAIGHTENING UP AND TURNING ON HIM ANGRILY.) Where have your wits fled? Precious Harp and Covet Spring have done the same as we. They will enter a fraudulent dragon, too. (PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT WITH BRANCHES.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(BRIGHTENING.) Ah, well, then ours can never win. I shall go back home. (HE STARTS TO CROSS LEFT, BUT TWENTY-FIRST FOLLOWS AND PULLS HIM BACK.)

TWENTY-FIRST

You will do nothing of the sort! We shall win! Ours is far larger and handsomer than theirs.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Alas!

TWENTY-FIRST

And if by further trickery our dragon is not chosen, we can denounce their creature as a fraud and them as traitors. What a stroke of luck! Our sisters must be told of it! (THEY EXIT UP RIGHT. PRECIOUS HARP PEEPS IN CAUTIOUSLY FROM LEFT, THEN ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY COVET SPRING, WHO IS CARRYING THE DRAGON COSTUME.)

PRECIOUS HARP

No, there is no sight of anything--nor sound.

COVET SPRING

My ears still ring with the roaring of the beast!

PRECIOUS HARP

But did you mark its size? Far larger than our dragon, and more handsome.

COVET SPRING

And more real. How can a costume dragon triumph now?

PRECIOUS HARP

(PACING DOWN CENTER.) That miserable treacherous girl, Twenty-First Cousin! Where could she have found such a thing?

COVET SPRING

Who can tell? I know only that our plot has failed. "Spilt water cannot be gathered up."

PRECIOUS HARP

(PAUSES IN HER PACING.) What if we should steal it?

COVET SPRING

What?

PRECIOUS HARP

Their dragon!

COVET SPRING

No, not I. I would not go near it!

PRECIOUS HARP

(RESUMES PACING.) No, it will be hidden well. There are too many caves to search. Tomorrow is the day-- (THROWING BACK HER HEAD, HER FIST PRESSED AGAINST HER FOREHEAD.) tomorrow-- (SUDDENLY.) Covet Spring!

COVET SPRING

Yes? Yes?

PRECIOUS HARP

(FACING FRONT, POINTING ABOVE AUDIENCE.) Look up! What is that-- in the sky? Do I dream?

COVET SPRING

(CROSSES TO PRECIOUS HARP DOWN CENTER. BOTH LOOK ABOVE THE AUDIENCE.) I see it too--a large bird, flying now above the city--growing larger as it comes toward us--

PRECIOUS HARP

Bird--it is too large! A dragon, Covet Spring! I know it is a dragon!

COVET SPRING

Flying--but then, it is a real one!

PRECIOUS HARP

Yes! An authentic live dragon! Keep your eyes upon it! We must catch it at all costs!

COVET SPRING

But look! Upon its back--a man! I see him clearly!

PRECIOUS HARP

They are heading for the palace! Come! (THEY CIRCLE THE STAGE, WALKING RAPIDLY, SEVERAL TIMES, INDICATING THAT THEY ARE COVERING A DISTANCE. THEY WALK COUNTER-CLOCKWISE AND CONTINUE WHILE THE PROPERTY MAN AND STAGE MANAGER ENTER.)

Act II, Scene 2

(PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT, HOLDS UP A POLE WITH A CLOTH REPRESENTING A STONE WALL ATTACHED TO IT. HE HOLDS THE POLE HORIZONTALLY LIKE A FISHING POLE, WITH THE CLOTH HANGING DOWN. THE STAGE MANAGER CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.)

STAGE MANAGER

(TO AUDIENCE.) The Lady Precious Harp and Covet Spring run rapidly, and soon draw near the palace walls. (INDICATING THE PROPERTY MAN.) That lazy fellow is to represent the wall, if he can but stay awake!

COVET SPRING

(STILL RUNNING, WINDED.) Oh--oh--I can go no further.

PRECIOUS HARP

Faster! It is flying low! The palace walls are just ahead!

COVET SPRING

But the man--its master--

PRECIOUS HARP

Shall be done away with! (APPROACHING THE "WALL," LOOKING OVER IT OUT INTO THE AUDIENCE. SHE IS UPSTAGE OF THE WALL.) See--the thing is circling, coming back to alight inside the walls! Guard! Guard! Capture that creature and its master!

COVET SPRING

(ALSO PEERING OVER THE "WALL.") We shall remain outside!

(ROARS AND SHOUTS COME FROM OFFSTAGE. PRECIOUS HARP LEANS HEAVILY ON THE POLE. THE WALL SAGS BUT STRAIGHTENS QUICKLY AS THE PROPERTY MAN MAKES AN EFFORT TO HOLD IT UP. SHE REPEATEDLY LEANS, TO THE PROPERTY MAN'S DISGUST.)

PRECIOUS HARP

How it struggles! Watch its scales, and do not scratch them!

COVET SPRING

Not a large dragon, though. Rather a small one.

PRECIOUS HARP

But real--that is the thing! Aha! They have it now. (THEY ARE WATCHING ACTION SUPPOSEDLY TAKING PLACE OFFSTAGE DOWN LEFT.)

COVET SPRING

And the young man, too. (GUARD ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES DOWN LEFT.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Guard! Take the dragon to the stable in the south field, and secure it there.

GUARD

It shall be done, Your Ladyship.

PRECIOUS HARP

See that it has food and water in abundance, and the softest straw to lie upon.

GUARD

I run to do your bidding.

COVET SPRING

(TO PRECIOUS HARP.) What of the young man?

PRECIOUS HARP

Ho, guard! Fling that young man, its master, into the darkest dungeon to await execution!

GUARD

All shall be carried out, Your Gracious Ladyship.

PRECIOUS HARP

He is a traitor dangerous to the safety--

COVET SPRING

(HE HAS CROSSED DOWN CENTER. TURNS BACK.) Hsst! Lady Precious Harp, someone approaches!

PRECIOUS HARP

Go, guard, quickly with your prisoners. Your silence shall be handsomely rewarded. (GUARD EXITS LEFT. PRECIOUS HARP CROSSES DOWN CENTER. THE PROPERTY MAN, EXHAUSTED, LOWERS THE WALL TO THE FLOOR.)

COVET SPRING

A lady comes. (JADE PURE ENTERS RIGHT, CROSSES DOWN CENTER.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Why, Covet Spring, it is my niece, Jade Pure.

COVET SPRING

The Princess!

JADE PURE

(PUSHING BACK THE VEIL WHICH HAD BEEN COVERING HER FACE.) Greetings, noble aunt and august chancellor. What do you do here outside the palace walls? (SHE LOOKS POINTEDLY AT THE PROPERTY MAN, WHO QUICKLY RAISES THE WALL TO ITS PROPER POSITION AGAIN.)

PRECIOUS HARP

My child, where have you been?

COVET SPRING

Alone and unattended?

JADE PURE

Why, I have been to the city to hear news of Road--that is, to learn if any have come with dragons to enter in the contest for my hand.

COVET SPRING

Ah! And have any such come--with dragons?

JADE PURE

Not a one. (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER, TURNING TOWARD AUDIENCE.) The townspeople question my decision openly, saying that no dragon still exists! But I am not convinced.

PRECIOUS HARP

Nor I!

COVET SPRING

Nor I!

PRECIOUS HARP

Rest assured that you shall have at least one dragon!

COVET SPRING

Very likely two.

JADE PURE

You know this? You are certain? But how?

PRECIOUS HARP

Be patient till tomorrow. Covet Spring, accompany me. There are matters to take up. (SHE EXITS RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY COVET SPRING.)

COVET SPRING

(AS THEY EXIT.) Good day, your Highness.

JADE PURE

Farewell, both. (AFTER THEY HAVE GONE.) My mind starts up in fear again! Tomorrow is to be my marriage day, and if a dragon is presented to me, I must wed its owner. Ah, Road Wanderer, why have you not yet come? (SHE EXITS UP RIGHT IN GREAT AGITATION. MUSIC IN. PROPERTY MAN ROLLS UP THE WALL AND TUCKS IT UNDER HIS ARM, EXITS TO EXTREME LEFT.)

Act II, Scene 3

(PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER WITH BENCH, PUTS IT DOWN AND LIES UPON IT. THE STAGE MANAGER CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.)

STAGE MANAGER

Alas, kind listeners, our next scene is a dungeon. Light can enter through the bars of that strong door--which all of you can see clearly.

(HE GLARES AT THE PROPERTY MAN, AND CLAPS HIS HANDS IMPATIENTLY. THE PROPERTY MAN JUMPS UP, CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER, SKETCHES A DOOR IN PANTOMIME, AND TAKES HOLD OF THE IMAGINARY BARS AND SHAKES THEM. HE THEN OPENS THE DOOR, STEPS OUT, LOCKS IT CAREFULLY, AND CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT, CARRYING IMAGINARY KEY.)

STAGE MANAGER

Who is the prisoner here? If you cannot guess it, wait with patience, for the dismal noise of chains will soon announce his coming. (HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. MUSIC OUT. PROPERTY MAN CLANKS HEAVY CHAINS. ROAD WANDERER ENTERS LEFT; AN IMAGINARY BALL-AND-CHAIN HINDERS HIS WALKING. THE CHAINS CLANK IN ACCOMPANIMENT TO HIS STEPS. HE CROSSES TO BENCH RIGHT CENTER, SITS.)

ROAD WANDERER

A prisoner! And in chains! Is this the order of the Princess? Who wants my death? And where is my dragon, Small One? (FOOTSTEPS SOUND OFFSTAGE. ROAD WANDERER SPRINGS UP AND LOOKS THROUGH BARS OF IMAGINARY CELL DOOR.) Guard! Guard! Where is Small One?

GUARD

(ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES DOWN LEFT AND STANDS WITH ARMS FOLDED.) Small One?

ROAD WANDERER

My dragon. What have you done with him?

GUARD

The dragon? It is being fed and washed and polished. They tell me that tomorrow it is to be entered in the contest for the hand of the Princess Jade Pure.

ROAD WANDERER

But--but that cannot be! The dragon is mine! I planned to enter it.

GUARD

Ah, but you will not be its owner long. The headman's knife will see to that!

ROAD WANDERER

Does the Princess Jade Pure know that I am here?

GUARD

That I cannot say. But my duties call me elsewhere. Farewell.

ROAD WANDERER

Wait! Will you carry a message to the Princess for me?

GUARD

What? Not I!

ROAD WANDERER

But she knows me. She will see to my release!

GUARD

I will carry no messages from one condemned by Lady Precious Harp. I value my own neck too highly. Your misfortune is not mine, poor fellow. Farewell! (EXITS LEFT.)

ROAD WANDERER

Guard! He is gone, and in a few short hours they will behead me. (CROSSES TO BENCH, SITS.) But what of Jade Pure? She will wait for me, not knowing. I must find some way to tell her. I must send a message somehow. Why, of course--an animal can be my messenger! (RISES.) I who speak their language must find some tiny creature nearby who will serve me. True, the Princess cannot understand its speech, but still may guess that it has come from me. (STRIDING ABOUT THE CELL, HE EXAMINES WALLS AND FLOOR.) Friends--friends--hear me. It is I, Road Wanderer! Who will go to fetch the Princess? Not a sound. I hear no creature stirring. Have they too deserted me? (WHIRLING ABOUT.) What was--ah! A mouse! A tiny mouse here in my cell. (CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER AND PICKS UP "MOUSE.") Come, small friend. We shall talk together, you and I. (STARTING TO CROSS LEFT.) Then out between the bars you go to take my message to the Princess! (EXITS LEFT, STROKING THE IMAGINARY MOUSE. CLANKING OF CHAINS ACCOMPANIES HIS EXIT. MUSIC IN.)

Act II, Scene 4

(PROPERTY MAN ENTERS FROM EXTREME LEFT, REMOVES BENCH TO EXTREME LEFT, CROSSES TO UPSTAGE LEFT AND DRAGS THE TABLE TO UPSTAGE CENTER. HE EXITS UP RIGHT AND IMMEDIATELY RETURNS UP LEFT WITH INCENSE BURNER TRIPOD, WHICH HE PLACES ON TABLE. HE CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT, SITS. STAGE MANAGER HAS CROSSED DOWN RIGHT, AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE.)

STAGE MANAGER

You will come away with me most gladly, I am certain, to a room more pleasant. Look about you--do you recognize once again the elegant apartment of the soon-to-be wedded Princess Jade Pure? (HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. JADE PURE RUNS IN UP RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN. THEY CROSS DOWN RIGHT. JADE PURE USES RUNNING SLEEVE.)

(MUSIC OUT. JADE PURE IS WEARING HER WEDDING COSTUME, AND PACES TO CENTER AND BACK. VERY AGITATED. TWENTY-FIRST FOLLOWS HER BACK AND FORTH, TRYING TO REARRANGE THE COSTUME.)

JADE PURE

Look graciously upon me, august ancestors! For this must be my wedding day! What shall I find when I descend to the throne room? Many suitors with dragons or none?

TWENTY-FIRST

There will be one--or two, I think.

JADE PURE

Hurry, dear cousin--make haste! I cannot wait to know much longer!

TWENTY-FIRST

But if Her Highness would remain still just one moment, I could--

JADE PURE

All is ready for the ceremony. The temple attendants await my coming. It will take but a few short moments. (STOPS PACING.) Where are your sisters who should help you?

TWENTY-FIRST

My sisters? A strange sickness has come over them most suddenly. Indeed, they are so changed that Your Highness would not recognize-- (CATCHING SIGHT OF SOMETHING ON THE FLOOR.) Eeeeeee!

JADE PURE

What is it? (LOOKING DOWN RIGHT IN THE DIRECTION OF TWENTY-FIRST COUSIN'S POINTING FINGER.) Ohh! A mouse!

TWENTY-FIRST

A mouse! It runs toward you!

JADE PURE

(IN HORROR.) No, no! A bench--a chair--oh, quickly! (THE PROPERTY MAN SHUFFLES IN FROM EXTREME LEFT WITH THE BENCH, WHICH HE PLACES LEFT CENTER. BOTH GIRLS MAKE A LEAP FOR IT ALMOST BEFORE HE SETS IT DOWN. HE EXITS EXTREME LEFT, YAWNING.)

TWENTY-FIRST

It comes closer!

JADE PURE

Hurry! Hurry! (AS THEY LEAP UP.) Ah--we have escaped! (PROPERTY MAN MAKES THE SOUND OF A MOUSE SQUEAKING.)

TWENTY-FIRST

But look! It will not leave! (HANDS TO HER EARS.) That horrid squeaking! (THE "MOUSE" RUNS BACK AND FORTH DOWN STAGE.)

JADE PURE

Back and forth--and back and forth again it runs below us!

TWENTY-FIRST

Hateful creature!

JADE PURE

(THOUGHTFULLY.) Looking up, as if at me!

TWENTY-FIRST

(STRIKING OUT WITH HER FAN.) Go! Run away! Be silent!

JADE PURE

Listen, cousin! How it squeaks--as if it tries to tell us something.

TWENTY-FIRST

It can tell me nothing!

JADE PURE

Look! It runs now to the door--now back to me--

TWENTY-FIRST

And to the door once more. The thing is mad!

JADE PURE

Or else it tries to tell me to come also. But I wonder why-- (CLAPPING HER HANDS.) Road Wanderer! He has come back, and sends it as a joke! (SQUEAKING INCREASES.) Perhaps he waits for me already in the throne room! (LEAPING DOWN.) Come! (CROSSES AND EXITS RIGHT.)

TWENTY-FIRST

No, no! Do not leave me here. I dare not set a foot down! Cursed day! This is an omen surely--a bad omen!

(THE PROPERTY MAN HAS SHUFFLED IN TO REMOVE THE BENCH.)

TWENTY-FIRST

No! I will not leave this bench! I--no, no! Ohhhhhh! (PROPERTY MAN TAKES HOLD OF END OF BENCH, TRYING TO MOVE IT. WHEN HE CANNOT, HE CALMLY PUSHES TWENTY-FIRST OFF THE BENCH, AND DRAGS IT TO EXTREME LEFT. SHE SCREAMS AND EXITS RIGHT, RUNNING. MUSIC IN.)

Act II, Scene 5

(PROPERTY MAN CROSSES UP LEFT AND EXITS, RETURNING IMMEDIATELY WITH AN ELABORATE CHAIR, WHICH HE PLACES UP CENTER IN FRONT OF THE TABLE. [SEE FIGURE 5.] HE CROSSES EXTREME LEFT, SITS. STAGE MANAGER CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.)

STAGE MANAGER

Our slothful servant is placing there the gilded chair in which the Princess Jade Pure sits in state. For this is now the exalted Royal Throne Room, and the ruler of this great kingdom approaches, in considerable haste. (HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT, SITS. MUSIC OUT.)

JADE PURE

(ENTERING FROM UP RIGHT, CROSSING CENTER, LOOKING AROUND.) No one! But Road Wanderer must be here! He has sent the mouse--I know it! (PAUSE.) Oh--perhaps he hides, and waits for me to find him! I shall search each room! (EXITS UP LEFT, RUNNING. LADY PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING BACK ON FROM LEFT, BOTH PULLING ON ROPES TIED AROUND THE NECK OF SMALL ONE. HE ROARS AND PROTESTS, SNAPPING AT THEM. THEY JUMP BACK. THEY CROSS TO LEFT CENTER.)

COVET SPRING

(IN WHAT HE HOPES IS A SOOTHING TONE.) Now then, take care! We are your loving friends!

PRECIOUS HARP

Ugly vicious brute! How dare it snap at me?

COVET SPRING

It can be disposed of once Jade Pure is won. But its young master, this--this Road Wanderer-- (AT THE MENTION OF THE NAME THE DRAGON ROARS AND LUNGES. THEY TUG FRANTICALLY AT THE ROPES, AS THE DRAGON CIRCLES THEM COUNTER-CLOCKWISE, ENDING IN THE SAME PLACE HE STARTED.)

GROUND PLAN
THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

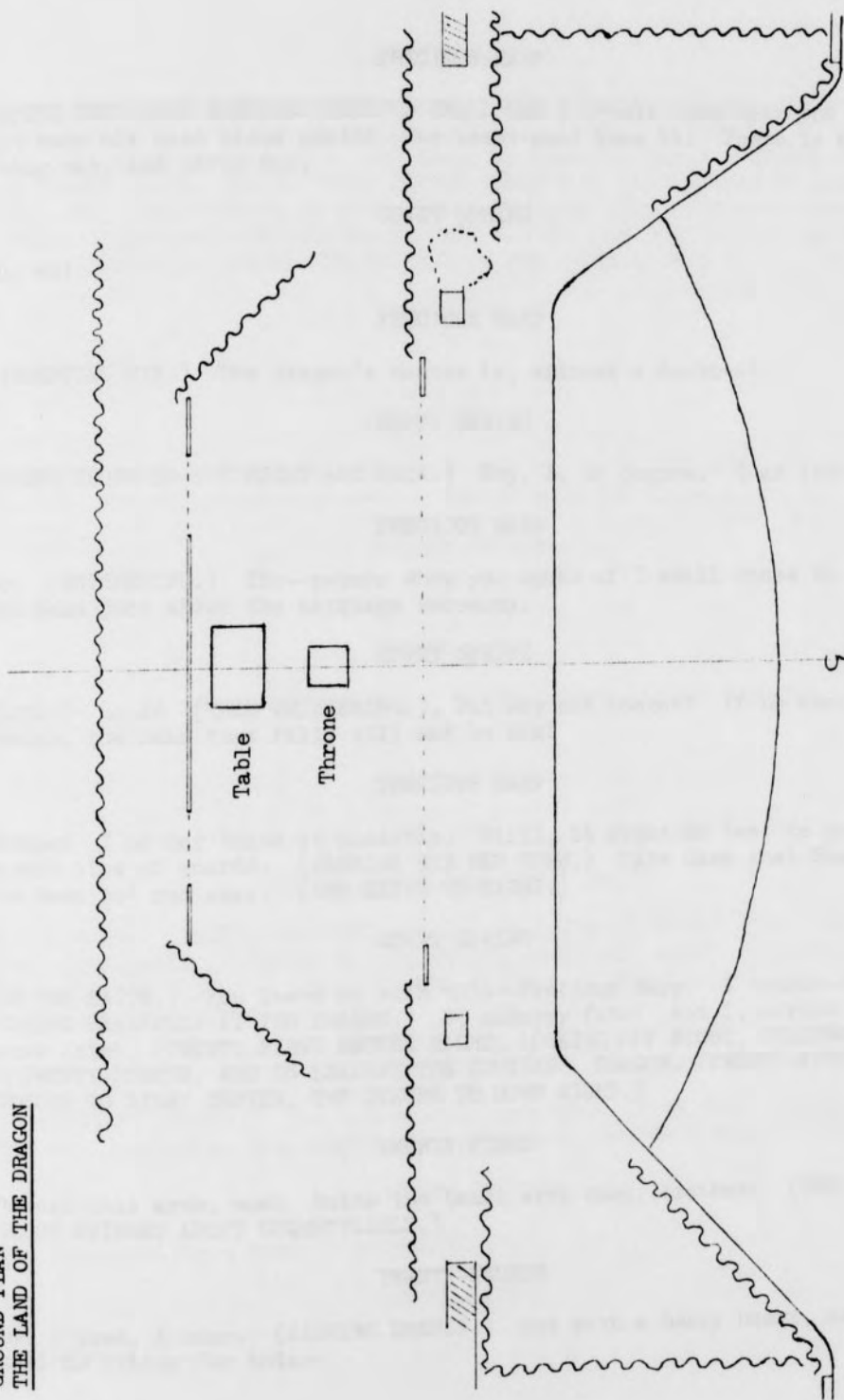


FIGURE 5

PRECIOUS HARP

(AFTER THEY HAVE SOMEWHAT SUBDUED SMALL ONE.) Fool! See that you do not name his name aloud again! The beast must know it. There is no young man, and never was.

COVET SPRING

Oh, no!

PRECIOUS HARP

(PROMPTING HIM.) The dragon's master is, without a doubt--?

COVET SPRING

(SHORT CROSS TO HIS RIGHT AND BACK.) Why, I, of course. I am its master.

PRECIOUS HARP

So! (WHISPERING.) The--person whom you spoke of I shall cause to lose his head just after the marriage ceremony.

COVET SPRING

(LOUD.) Good! (THEN WHISPERING.) But why not sooner? If he should escape, the head that falls will not be his!

PRECIOUS HARP

Escape? I do not think it possible. Still, it might be best to post a second line of guards. (HANDING HIM HER ROPE.) Take care that Small One does not run away. (SHE EXITS UP RIGHT.)

COVET SPRING

(AS SHE EXITS.) You leave me with this--Precious Harp. I cannot--! (GAZING FEARFULLY AT THE DRAGON.) O, unhappy fate! And I, afraid of house cats! (TWENTY-FIRST ENTERS RIGHT, LOOKING OFF RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY TWENTY-FOURTH, WHO IS LEADING THE COUSINS' DRAGON. TWENTY-FIRST CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER, THE OTHERS TO DOWN RIGHT.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Through this arch, now. Guide the beast with care, brother! (THE DRAGON SWISHES ABOUT COQUETTISHLY.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Yes, I come, I come. (SIGHING DEEPLY.) But with a heavy heart, and still no liking for this--

TWENTY-FIRST

Hush! (INDICATING COVET SPRING WHOSE HANDS ARE FULL KEEPING HIS DRAGON UNDER CONTROL.) Old Covet Spring is here! (WITH A TITTER BEHIND HER FAN, INDICATING SMALL ONE.) And there is Precious Harp! (TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD, INSIDE THEIR DRAGON, PRANCE TO LEFT CENTER TO LOOK AT SMALL ONE, THEN BACK UP TO DOWN RIGHT, GIGGLING IN A MOST UN-DRAGONLIKE MANNER. TWENTY-FOURTH CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER. HE DOES NOT LAUGH, BUT STARES FIXEDLY AT THE DRAGON ENTERED BY THE OPPOSITION.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(SUDDENLY.) But that is--

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO "DRAGON" AND TAPPING IT SMARTLY WITH HER FAN.) Sisters, you forget yourselves! A dragon must not laugh.

TWENTY-SECOND

But Precious Harp--

TWENTY-THIRD

In that! (ALL THREE GIRLS GIGGLE. TWENTY-FIRST QUICKLY BECOMES BUSINESS-LIKE AGAIN.)

TWENTY-FIRST

Enough! Forget that you are girls now. If you must speak, roar!

TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD

Yes, sister. (THEY ROAR OBEDIENTLY. SMALL ONE LIFTS HIS HEAD, LOOKS AT THEM, AND GRUNTS IN SURPRISE. COVET SPRING STARTS, GAZES IN MINGLED SCORN AND ALARM AT THE RIVAL DRAGON, TAKES A FIRMER HOLD ON SMALL ONE'S ROPE, AND TURNS HIS BACK HAUGHTILY ON THE OTHERS.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) You are solemn, brother. Is it that you do not find her laughable, the haughty Precious Harp, inside a dragon's costume?

TWENTY-FOURTH

That dragon--I have seen it once before!

TWENTY-FIRST

Of course.

TWENTY-FOURTH

No, not then in the field, but at my farm. (CROSSING LEFT CENTER TOWARD SMALL ONE, THEN BACK TO CENTER.) Yes! That is Small One!

TWENTY-FIRST

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, FOLLOWED BY TWENTY-FOURTH. MEANWHILE THE FAKE DRAGON EDGES ACROSS THE STAGE TO LEFT. DREAMILY.) Much smaller than our dragon, I agree! And not one-tenth so handsome or so real!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(PULLING HER SLEEVE.) You do not understand!

(THE COUSINS' DRAGON HAS EDGED PLAYFULLY LEFT, CLOSER AND CLOSER TO SMALL ONE, WHO WATCHES WARILY. COVET SPRING ALSO WATCHES NERVOUSLY, THE CORD IN HIS HAND TWITCHING VIOLENTLY. SUDDENLY THE COUSINS' DRAGON MAKES A RUSH AT SMALL ONE, ROARING, THEN SKIPS AWAY TO RIGHT CENTER. SMALL ONE CROUCHES, ROARS IN REPLY.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(SURPRISED.) Why, what a splendid roar she has! I should not have thought--

TWENTY-FOURTH

(IN DESPERATION.) That is not Precious Harp, I tell you, but Small One! A dragon! A live dragon!

TWENTY-FIRST

Nonsense!

(GROWING STILL BOLDER, THE COUSINS' DRAGON CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER, STAMPS ON SMALL ONE'S TOES, AND LEAPS AWAY TO UP RIGHT, CAPERING GAILY ABOUT. BUT SMALL ONE, ANGERED, ROARS AND GIVES CHASE, PULLING THE FRIGHTENED COVET SPRING ALONG WITH HIM, TO CENTER. TWENTY-FOURTH GROANS, COVERS HIS EYES WITH HIS HAND. ONLY THE COUSINS INSIDE THE DRAGON AND TWENTY-FIRST FAIL TO TAKE THE EVENT SERIOUSLY.)

COVET SPRING

Oh--oh--oh! Stop! Stop! I beg you!

TWENTY-FIRST

(LAUGHING.) Lady Precious Harp, who scrambles on the floor--my eyes stream tears of laughter!

TWENTY-FOURTH

No, not Precious Harp! That is not Precious Harp inside!

TWENTY-FIRST

But I have seen her! Seeing is believing, foolish one!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(SUDDENLY POINTING TO THE LEFT ENTRANCE.) Then, look! (LADY PRECIOUS HARP STANDS THERE, GAZING AT THE SCENE IN CONSTERNATION.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(AGHAST.) Precious Harp!

PRECIOUS HARP

Covet Spring! Take care! Our dragon--bring him here!

TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD

(STOPPING SHORT.) Lady Precious Harp?

TWENTY-FIRST

It is a dragon! A live dragon!

(WITH SCREAMS OF FRIGHT, THE COUSINS' DRAGON BEGINS TO RUN IN EARNEST. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY DASH IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS SO DETERMINEDLY THAT THE DRAGON COSTUME DIVIDES. THE TWO SECTIONS RUN WILDLY ABOUT, TWENTY-SECOND DOWN RIGHT CHASED BY TWENTY-FIRST, AND TWENTY-THIRD RIGHT CENTER CHASED BY TWENTY-FOURTH. THE SECTIONS REALIZE THEY ARE SEPARATED, AND TRY TO FIT THEMSELVES BACK TOGETHER, WITH TWENTY-FIRST ASSISTING. THEY BUMP AND CANNOT GET TOGETHER. SIMULTANEOUSLY, PRECIOUS HARP GOES TO THE AID OF COVET SPRING AND HELPS HIM TO PULL SMALL ONE BACK TO STAGE LEFT. HE BALKS, BUT THEY SUCCEED. IN THE EXCITEMENT NO ONE HAS NOTICED JADE PURE, WHO HAS ENTERED UP LEFT AND CROSSED TO LEFT OF THRONE UP CENTER. SHE LOOKS WORRIED. WHAT SHE SEES BOTH ASTONISHES AND AMUSES HER, BUT SHE DOES NOT YET BECOME AWARE OF SMALL ONE.)

TWENTY-SECOND

Save me!

TWENTY-THIRD

Save yourself! I cannot!

PRECIOUS HARP

(TO COVET SPRING.) Hold him back!

COVET SPRING

Do I not struggle?

TWENTY-FOURTH

We are doomed! Alas!

TWENTY-FIRST

Sisters! Sister, come back!

PRECIOUS HARP

(STOPPING.) What? Does their dragon divide itself?

COVET SPRING

Why, it is not a dragon after all!

PRECIOUS HARP

Ho! Treason!

TWENTY-FOURTH

O woe!

TWENTY-SECOND

Look! The Princess!

PRECIOUS AND COVET

(BOWING AT LEFT.) The Princess--

ALL COUSINS

(BOWING EVEN LOWER AT RIGHT.) The Princess-- (THERE IS SILENCE AS JADE PURE CROSSES TO THE THRONE AND SITS. ALL HOLD THEIR BOWS, MOTIONLESS.)

JADE PURE

I thank you for your salutations. Do not stand on ceremony, but look up now.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER.) Your Radiant Highness, I would bring a charge against--

COVET SPRING

(BREAKING IN EXCITEDLY.) There stand the traitors!

TWENTY-FIRST

(FALLING TO HER KNEES RIGHT CENTER.) Mercy! Spare us, O Most Gracious Sovereign!

TWENTY-SECOND AND TWENTY-THIRD

(ALSO KNEELING, AWKWARDLY.) Mercy! Mercy!

JADE PURE

(SMOTHERING A SMILE.) What are those creatures?

PRECIOUS HARP

A bogus dragon, brought to trick Your Highness.

COVET SPRING

Inside are that wretch's sisters!

PRECIOUS HARP

I demand that they be put in dungeons, charged with treason.

COVET SPRING

Yes, and that false prince who is their brother.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Then if I must die, I die the simple farmer that I am.

JADE PURE

Why, now I know you! You are his friend--the friend of my Road Wanderer! (SMALL ONE, WITH A HAPPY ROAR, PULLS AWAY FROM COVET SPRING AND CROSSES UP CENTER TO JADE PURE. HE LOWERS HIS HEAD TO BE STROKED. PRECIOUS HARP JUMPS LEFT OUT OF THE WAY.) And--yes, it is Small One, his dragon! (STROKING THE DRAGON'S HEAD.) I had feared that we should never meet again!

PRECIOUS HARP

The dragon pleases you?

JADE PURE

(DELIGHTED.) He does! Indeed he does! I have decided, this one is my choice, and I shall wed his master. Bring him now before me.

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER. PRECIOUS HARP COUNTERS LEFT.) I am he, Your Highness, the fortunate owner of this worthy beast.

JADE PURE

You? Oh, no!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Indeed, no!

JADE PURE

You are not he, for I know him well!

COVET SPRING

(TURNING TO PRECIOUS HARP, IN CONFUSION.) Your Ladyship--

PRECIOUS HARP

(SMOOTHLY.) Ah, but Your Highness, Covet Spring is surely the present owner. That young man you speak of willingly parted with the dragon for a sum of gold, saying that he had no wish to marry. (SHE HAS CROSSED TO LEFT CENTER. SMALL ONE SNAPS AT HER, AND SHE JUMPS BACK.)

JADE PURE

He sold Small One?

COVET SPRING

(PICKING UP HIS CUE.) Er--yes, to me! Then since this dragon is your choice, I shall become your husband.

PRECIOUS HARP

Exactly! You have pledged your royal word.

JADE PURE

But--Covet Spring! (LOW, SINKING BACK.) It is not he I love!

COVET SPRING

Your word is law. I go at once to prepare for the happy ceremony.

JADE PURE

(COVET SPRING STARTS TO CROSS LEFT, PAUSES AND TURNS BACK AS JADE PURE SPEAKS. JADE PURE RISES.) No! No, I will not marry him! That hateful sly old man!

PRECIOUS HARP

(TRIUMPHANTLY.) You have made your choice, niece. (CROSSING TO COVET SPRING DOWN LEFT.) Let us see to that beheading now.

COVET SPRING

I agree, I agree. Delay may still prove dangerous. Your Highness, we beg leave to withdraw. (JADE PURE GESTURES PERMISSION.) We leave you to judge these unworthy traitors. (THEY EXIT LEFT.)

COUSINS

(TIMIDLY.) Your Highness--

JADE PURE

Go. Later I shall judge you. Please go and leave me. (SITS.)

TWENTY-FIRST

(SCRAMBLING TO HER FEET AND BACKING OUT RIGHT, BOWING.) Yes, great and glorious Princess.

TWENTY-SECOND

(FOLLOWING SUIT.) We thank you.

TWENTY-THIRD

(FOLLOWING SUIT.) We most gratefully thank you. (THEY EXIT RIGHT. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN REMAINS, FIDGETING NERVOUSLY, GATHERING COURAGE TO SPEAK.)

JADE PURE

So, Small One, he has left you too! And now, deserted, I must marry Covet Spring.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Ahem!

JADE PURE

Still here? Why have you waited?

TWENTY-FOURTH

Why, to tell you--

JADE PURE

Speak!

TWENTY-FOURTH

That I do not believe it!

JADE PURE

What?

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO THRONE.) I still do not believe that Small One's master sold him to these villains! Nor do I believe he willingly has stayed away.

JADE PURE

But then, where is he?

TWENTY-FOURTH

Something is afoot, I fear. If Small One there could talk, we should know what it is.

JADE PURE

(RISING.) Oh, Small One, try to tell us! Where is he? Where is Road Wanderer? (THE DRAGON ROARS, SAYING "ROAD WANDERER" RECOGNIZABLY. HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT, AND BACK TO THE THRONE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

He knows the name!

JADE PURE

He means that we should follow! (TO TWENTY-FOURTH.) Come with me! Now, lead us, Small One, to Road Wanderer! (SMALL ONE EXITS RIGHT, FOLLOWED BY JADE PURE AND TWENTY-FOURTH. MUSIC IN. PROPERTY MAN ENTERS FROM EXTREME LEFT, CROSSES UP CENTER, DRAGS TABLE UP LEFT. HE REMOVES CHAIR FROM UP CENTER, TAKING IT OUT THROUGH UP LEFT EXIT. HE RETURNS IMMEDIATELY WITH EXECUTIONER'S BLOCK, CROSSES DOWN CENTER AND PLACES BLOCK DOWN CENTER. CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT, SITS.)

Act II, Scene 6

STAGE MANAGER

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER, ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE.) And none too soon they go forward to find Road Wanderer, for in a lonely field not far from the palace, a dreadful deed will soon be done, unless the Princess comes in time. For is that not a headman's block? And is that not Road Wanderer who comes to kneel before it? Ah, alas! (HE CROSSES TO EXTREME RIGHT. MUSIC OUT. PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING ENTER LEFT, STEALTHILY AND IN HASTE. THEY CROSS TO CENTER.)

PRECIOUS HARP

There is no time to spare. This spot will do as well as any.

COVET SPRING

Yes, my mind will not rest while he is alive. Jade Pure might learn of it.

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER, CALLING OFFSTAGE.) Ho, guard! Send forth the prisoner.

GUARD

(ENTERING LEFT WITH ROAD WANDERER. GUARD SHOVES ROAD WANDERER TO LEFT CENTER, REMAINS AT LEFT HIMSELF.) Prisoner, go forward.

ROAD WANDERER

Are you the Lady Precious Harp who has imprisoned me?

PRECIOUS HARP

That is my name.

ROAD WANDERER

Of what crime am I guilty? Can you tell me that?

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO PRECIOUS HARP.) She cannot! (CONFUSED.) Er, that is--

PRECIOUS HARP

(SMOOTHLY.) It is enough that I condemn you. Go to kneel before that block.

COVET SPRING

Yes, go!

ROAD WANDERER

Does Jade Pure know of this? Does she too wish my death?

PRECIOUS HARP

(QUICKLY.) She knows of it, certainly, and she approves.

COVET SPRING

(PROMPTED BY A POKE.) Why, yes--approves most heartily!

ROAD WANDERER

(BITTERLY.) She knows! Then her ingratitude is now complete. I go to kneel before the headman's block with bitter pleasure! (HE CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO THE BLOCK, KNEELS UPSTAGE OF IT, FACING THE AUDIENCE, AND PLACES HIS NECK UPON IT.)

COVET SPRING

Good!

PRECIOUS HARP

(STRETCHING OUT HER LEFT HAND IMPERIOUSLY.) Bring me the great beheading sword. (PROPERTY MAN CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER WITH LARGE CURVED SWORD. PRECIOUS HARP TAKES IT, SEEMINGLY UNAWARE OF THE PROPERTY MAN'S PRESENCE. HE CROSSES TO EXTREME LEFT, SITS.)

COVET SPRING

What a fine broad blade! Is it quite sharp?

PRECIOUS HARP

We soon shall see. First, I pluck a hair from your gray beard-- (PLUCKING AN IMAGINARY HAIR.) so!

COVET SPRING

(CLUTCHING AT HIS BEARD.) Ouch! Ouch!

PRECIOUS HARP

And next, test the edge against it. (SHE HOLDS UP THE HAIR, BRINGS THE BLADE AGAINST IT.) Ah, I have dropped the hair. Another one will do as well.

COVET SPRING

(SHE PLUCKS ANOTHER HAIR. COVET SPRING CROSSES TO CENTER.) Ouch! Ouch!

ROAD WANDERER

Why do you mock my misery with these delays? Dispatch me quickly.

PRECIOUS HARP

He is right. We must make haste.

COVET SPRING

(CROSSING TO PRECIOUS HARP. RUBBING HIS CHIN.) Then give the sword to me.

PRECIOUS HARP

To you? What do you want with it?

COVET SPRING

(TAKES THE SWORD FROM PRECIOUS HARP, STARTS TO CROSS DOWN CENTER TO ROAD WANDERER.) I myself shall deliver the fatal blow.

PRECIOUS HARP

(TAKES SWORD BACK, STARTS TO CROSS DOWN LEFT.) Ah, no! That privilege is mine.

COVET SPRING

(CROSSES TO PRECIOUS HARP AND SNATCHES SWORD.) You are a woman!

PRECIOUS HARP

(SNATCHING SWORD BACK.) But my right arm has more strength than yours!

COVET SPRING

(STRUGGLING FOR POSSESSION OF SWORD. BOTH HAVE HANDS ON IT. [SEE FIGURE 6.]) That is not so!

ROAD WANDERER

The death blow! Come!

COVET SPRING

(AS SHE WRESTS THE SWORD AWAY.) Well, then, I give it up to you.
(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER. SLYLY, AS SHE TAKES A FEW PRACTICE SWINGS.)
What a pity! That is such a lovely robe!



FIGURE 6

PRECIOUS HARP

(STOPPING ABRUPTLY.) My robe? Why do you speak of it?

COVET SPRING

(SHRUGGING.) His blood will stain it, doubtless. But no matter.
(MOVING AWAY DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) I shall stand here and watch.

PRECIOUS HARP

My silken gown stained with his--no! (CROSSING TO COVET SPRING DOWN
RIGHT CENTER.) Covet Spring, I yield the right to you.

COVET SPRING

(REFUSING THE SWORD.) I should not dream of so depriving you! No, no--

PRECIOUS HARP

Come! Take the sword.

COVET SPRING

(SHAKING HIS HEAD VIGOROUSLY.) No. You may strike. (WITH A WAVE OF
HIS HAND.) His neck awaits you!

PRECIOUS HARP

Covet Spring, I must insist that you perform the deed!

ROAD WANDERER

(RAISING HIS HEAD AND LOOKING AT THEM.) Good Covet Spring, I beg you,
end my heart-ache!

COVET SPRING

(SMUGLY.) Then, since you both insist, I shall make ready. (HE PULLS
HIS HEADDRESS DOWN MORE FIRMLY ON HIS HEAD, AND PAINSTAKINGLY ROLLS HIS
SLEEVES TO HIS ELBOWS. PRECIOUS HARP TAPS HER FOOT IMPATIENTLY. ROAD
WANDERER SITS BACK ON HIS HEELS AND VIEWS THE PROCEEDINGS GLOOMILY.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(IMPATIENTLY.) Do you intend to strike or not! Someone may come.

ROAD WANDERER

Have mercy, and act swiftly!

PRECIOUS HARP

Or I may yet forget my gown!

COVET SPRING

I am ready now. Give me the sword. (COVET SPRING CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO ROAD WANDERER, STANDING RIGHT OF HIM. ROAD WANDERER OBLIGINGLY PLACES HIS NECK ON THE BLOCK AGAIN, AND COVET SPRING RESTS THE BLADE LIGHTLY ON HIS NECK, THEN RAISES THE SWORD FOR A MIGHTY SWING.)

ROAD WANDERER

Goodbye, false Princess!

COVET SPRING

Now:

PRECIOUS HARP

(CROSSES DOWN CENTER, CATCHING COVET SPRING'S ARM AS IT DESCENDS.)
Stop! You are holding the blade upside-down! The sharp edge faces the sky!

COVET SPRING

So it does, so it does! (CHANGES THE SWORD TO THE CORRECT POSITION, AND SWINGS IT ALOFT.) This time I shall not fail!

ROAD WANDERER

Let nothing stop you.

COVET SPRING

Nothing! Prepare to meet your doom! (JADE PURE, TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN, AND SMALL ONE ENTER RIGHT AND CROSS TO RIGHT CENTER.)

JADE PURE

(HORRIFIED.) No, no!

TWENTY-FOURTH

Stop!

JADE PURE

Put down that sword!

PRECIOUS HARP

Strike quickly!

COVET SPRING

(DROPPING THE SWORD AS SMALL ONE CROSSES TO DOWN CENTER, THEN CHASES COVET SPRING AND PRECIOUS HARP TO STAGE LEFT. THE GUARD EXITS LEFT HASTILY.) Save me, save me! (JADE PURE AND TWENTY-FOURTH CROSS DOWN CENTER TO ROAD WANDERER, REMOVE THE IMAGINARY BONDS THAT SECURE HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK, HELP HIM TO RISE.)

ROAD WANDERER

Jade Pure!

TWENTY-FOURTH

My friend!

JADE PURE

(TENDERLY.) My poor Road Wanderer.

PRECIOUS HARP

Guard! Guard!

TWENTY-FOURTH

He ran off when the dragon approached.

COVET SPRING

(HIS TEETH CHATTERING.) M-miserable coward!

JADE PURE

What a near escape from death!

ROAD WANDERER

Then you did not order my beheading?

JADE PURE

I? Never! It was all her doing!

COVET SPRING

We are lost!

JADE PURE

(HOLDING HANDS WITH ROAD WANDERER, CROSSING LEFT.) You are lost indeed! Your plot has failed. Road Wanderer, the true owner of this dragon, shall become my husband and be the Emperor. (THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF SLOW CHIMES IS SOUNDED BY THE PROPERTY MAN AT EXTREME LEFT.)

PRECIOUS HARP

Listen! The great clock in the square is striking noon! At the twelfth stroke you will reach your eighteenth year, and I shall claim the throne. (JUBILANTLY.) We have won, Covet Spring, we have won!

COVET SPRING

At last!

PRECIOUS HARP

(TO HIM.) Come to the square with me! Let us stand beneath the clock, and at its final stroke you shall proclaim me Empress! (PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING EXIT LEFT HURRIEDLY, WHILE SMALL ONE MOMENTARILY LOOKS FRONT. HE TURNS AND GIVES CHASE, EXITING LEFT.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Alas! Three--four--

JADE PURE

(DESPAIRINGLY.) What can we do now? Five--six--I am not yet married!

ROAD WANDERER

There may be a way! (HE FACES OFFSTAGE LEFT AND GIVES TWO SHRILL WHISTLES, FINGERS BETWEEN HIS TEETH.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

What now? Have his senses left him?

JADE PURE

(WRINGING HER HANDS.) Listen! Eight--nine--

TWENTY-FOURTH

But the strokes are slower! (ROAD WANDERER GIVES SEVERAL SHORT WHISTLES.)

JADE PURE AND TWENTY-FOURTH

Ten--eleven--

JADE PURE

But the twelfth--it does not strike!

TWENTY-FOURTH

What can have happened? I shall run to see! (EXITS LEFT.)

JADE PURE

Road Wanderer, have you done this?

ROAD WANDERER

Not I, but the dragon-flies which come at my call. They are clinging by the thousands to the hammer of the great clock so that it may not strike twelve!

JADE PURE

(CLAPPING HER HANDS.) Oh, wonderful! Then you have saved the kingdom!

ROAD WANDERER

But you are not wed! Where is a temple and a holy man to marry us?

JADE PURE

All is ready.

ROAD WANDERER

Let us run swiftly! (THEY CROSS TO RIGHT, THEN PAUSE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(ENTERING LEFT, CROSSING TO CENTER.) O sorry day! (AS HE LOOKS AT THEM.) Where are you going?

JADE PURE

To be married so that I may claim the throne.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Too late! Precious Harp and Covet Spring are coming with my sisters! They are riding horses, and will overtake you!

JADE PURE

(ANXIOUSLY.) Road Wanderer--

ROAD WANDERER

Riding horses, are they? But all animals obey me! (CROSSES TO CENTER.)
Shall I teach you what to say to stop their horses?

TWENTY-FOURTH

Well--

JADE PURE

Oh, yes!

ROAD WANDERER

Then listen--meh-neh cho-po tee-ka.

TWENTY-FOURTH

Many choppy--what?

ROAD WANDERER

No, no! Listen, man, once more. Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka.

TWENTY-FOURTH

I do not know--

ROAD WANDERER

They will run in a circle till I bid the dragon-flies to let the clock
strike twelve.

JADE PURE

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, LOOKING OFFSTAGE.) Road Wanderer! I see
them! We must hurry to the temple!

TWENTY-FOURTH

But the words--if I cannot remember--

ROAD WANDERER

You must remember! Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka! (HE CROSSES TO JADE PURE
AND THEY EXIT RIGHT, RUNNING.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka. Of course! I have it now! (HORSES' HOOFBEATS,
MADE BY PROPERTY MAN EXTREME LEFT, SOUND FAINTLY.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

Hoofbeats! They are coming! But the horses cannot hear me from this distance. I shall wait. Meh-eh po-co--these are not the right words! (MOVES AGITATEDLY AROUND AT CENTER.) What are they? Ma-ny tea-cups-- I forget! I do not know them! (HOOFBEATS LOUDER.) They are nearer! I must try! (RUNNING TO LOOK OFFSTAGE LEFT AND SHOUTING.) Chop-sticks! Ma-ny chop-sticks! (RUNNING BACK TO CENTER.) But they do not stop! (SHOUTING ABOVE THE HOOFBEATS.) Teacups! Choppy teacups! Many choppy teacups! And still they come! (THUMPING HIS FOREHEAD.) The words, the words! (PRECIOUS HARP, COVET SPRING, AND THE THREE COUSINS ENTER FROM LEFT, GALLOPING ON IMAGINARY HORSES. THEY CROSS TO DOWN CENTER. TWENTY-FOURTH CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AS THE "HORSES" ENTER. HE MAKES A LAST DESPERATE EFFORT TO REMEMBER THE WORDS.) Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka! Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka! (THE "HORSES" REAR AND BEGIN GALLOPING IN A LARGE CIRCLE CLOCKWISE, THEIR RIDERS FRANTIC, AND ATTEMPTING TO STOP THEM. ALL RIDERS CARRY STYLIZED WHIPS.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(TO HER "HORSE.") No, no! That way!

COVET SPRING

What affects the horses?

TWENTY-FIRST

Mine must be bewitched!

TWENTY-SECOND

Mine will not turn!

TWENTY-THIRD

Mine runs away! Oh, oh!

TWENTY-FOURTH

(JUBILANTLY.) I have remembered! And the horses heard me! See them trotting in a circle! (BEGINNING TO CHUCKLE.) See my sisters-- (LAUGHING HARDER AS HE WATCHES.) Lady Precious Harp--and Covet Spring! Go faster, horses, faster! (REPEATING RAPIDLY.) Meh-neh cho-po tee-ka!

PRECIOUS HARP

(JOLTED.) He--gallops--faster!

COVET SPRING

But--I cannot--stay astride--

TWENTY-FIRST

Brother--what have--you said to them?

TWENTY-SECOND

Have mercy, brother!

TWENTY-THIRD

Make them--stop, I beg--of you!

TWENTY-FOURTH

I cannot, for I do not know the words! (LAUGHING.) Oh, what a most delightful sight! My haughty sisters--wicked Lady Precious Harp--

COVET SPRING

Then--must we--ride forever?

TWENTY-FOURTH

You must ride until the twelfth stroke sounds. And then-- (SCRATCHING HIS HEAD.) I cannot say!

PRECIOUS HARP

(HOPE STIRRING.) The--twelfth stroke? (TWO SHRILL WHISTLES SOUND FROM OFFSTAGE. THERE IS A PAUSE, THEN THE CLOCK STRIKES ONCE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(ANXIOUSLY.) It is noon!

PRECIOUS HARP

(SUDDENLY.) My horse--he throws me off!

COVET SPRING

And mine!

TWENTY-FIRST

And mine! (WITH WAILS OF DESPAIR EACH "RIDER" IS BUCKED OFF IN TURN, AROUND THE CIRCLE. THEY SPRAWL ON THE GROUND.)

PRECIOUS HARP

(RISING, DAZED BUT DETERMINED.) But it is noon. Then I must be the Empress! (BELLS PEAL JOYFULLY FROM OFFSTAGE.)

TWENTY-FOURTH

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, JUBILANTLY.) Not so! Listen to the joyful bells! Listen, and bow down to the Emperor and Empress, newly crowned, of the mighty Southern Kingdom! (GONG.)

(STATELY CHINESE MUSIC IS PLAYED AS BACKGROUND FROM HERE TO THE END. BELLS RING. JADE PURE AND ROAD WANDERER ENTER UP RIGHT AND CROSS TO CENTER, WHERE THEY STAND TOGETHER FACING DOWNSTAGE. HE IS NOW DRESSED IN A GORGEOUS ROBE, AND BOTH WEAR ELABORATE HEADDRESSES. THE CONSPIRATORS SCRAMBLE TO THEIR FEET, THE THREE COUSINS ON THE ROYAL COUPLE'S LEFT, PRECIOUS HARP AND COVET SPRING ON THEIR RIGHT. TWENTY-FOURTH COUSIN STANDS ON THE RIGHT. SMALL ONE AND THE GUARD ENTER LEFT AND STAND ON THE LEFT. PROPERTY MAN IS DOWNSTAGE ON THE LEFT AND STAGE MANAGER DOWNSTAGE ON THE RIGHT. ALL FORM A WIDE "V" WITH JADE PURE AND ROAD WANDERER AT THE POINT OF THE "V" AT CENTER STAGE. ALL BOW TO JADE PURE AND ROAD WANDERER.)

JADE PURE

I, Empress Jade Pure, salute my worthy-- (THEN WITH A FROWN AT THE CONSPIRATORS NEAREST HER, WHO CLASP THEIR HANDS IN SUPPLICATION.) and my unworthy subjects! (THE RIGHT SIDE BOWS.)

ALL

Long live our glorious Empress Jade Pure! (ALL STAND UP.)

ROAD WANDERER

I, Emperor Road Wanderer, salute my royal-- (WITH A FROWN AT THE CONSPIRATORS NEAREST HIM, WHO ALSO CLASP THEIR HANDS. LEFT SIDE BOWS.) and my soon-to-be-imprisoned subjects!

ALL

Long live our matchless Emperor Road Wanderer! (ALL STAND UP. ALL TURN SIMULTANEOUSLY TO FACE THE AUDIENCE.)

STAGE MANAGER

These, the illustrious actors of our play, and this modest helper salute each most polite and generous spectator!

ALL

(EXTENDING BOTH HANDS OUT, THEN ALL BOWING TOGETHER. [SEE FIGURE 7.] NOT THE PROPERTY MAN, WHO SITS CROSS-LEGGED ON THE FLOOR AND APPEARS TO BE ASLEEP.) Long live this gracious and exalted audience! The end! (THEY BOW, ALTERNATING SIDES, AS THE MUSIC PLAYS AND THE BELLS RING OUT AGAIN.)

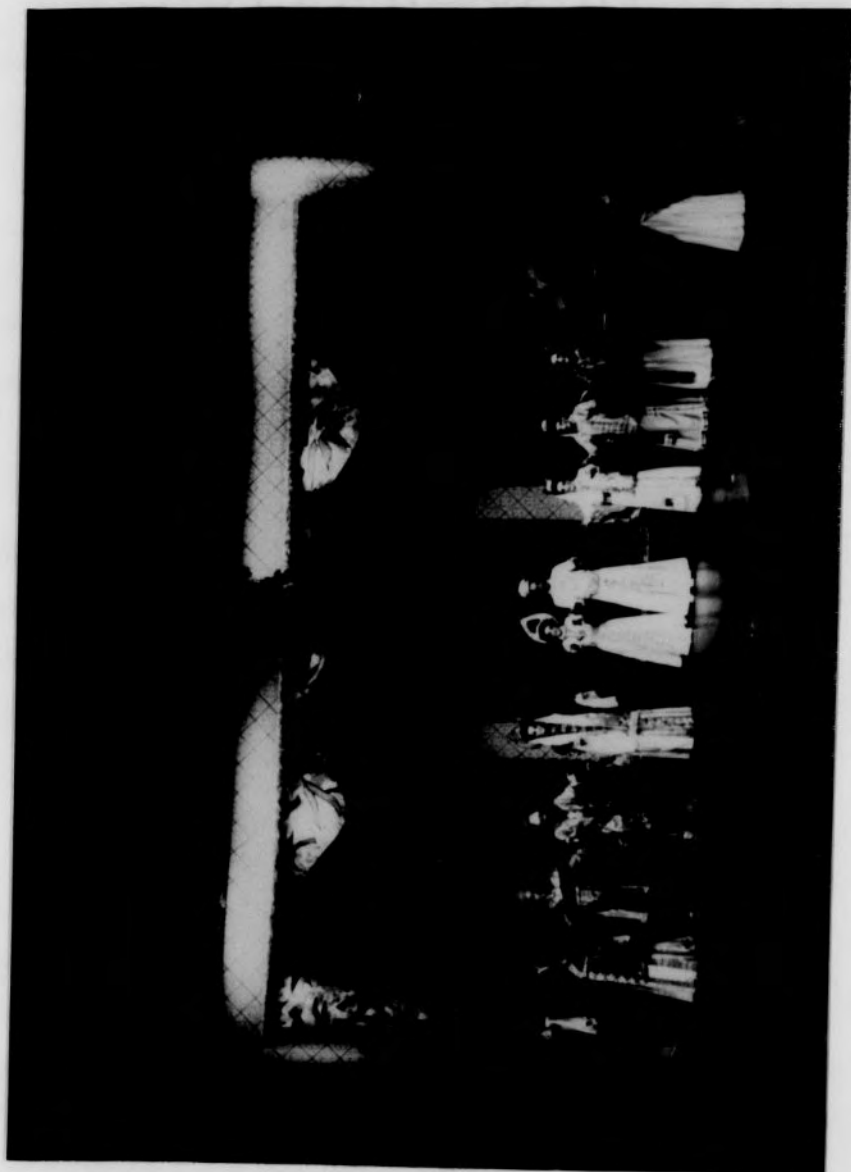


FIGURE 7

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Introduction

The Land of the Dragon was presented for twelve performances on the main stage in Taylor Building from October 26 through November 2, 1975. Audience response was enthusiastic from both children and adults, and the director felt that a successful production was achieved.

Chapter III of this thesis will include four areas of evaluation of the production: (1) an evaluation of the interpretation stated in Chapter I as related to the final product, (2) an evaluation of actor-director relationships, (3) an evaluation of audience reaction to the production, and (4) personal observations of the director which will serve to tie together the foregoing coverage.

Achievement of Interpretation in the Production

It was the director's intention to present The Land of the Dragon as an adaptation for children of the dramatic quality of the Chinese classical theatre. It is the opinion of the director that, essentially, this goal was achieved. The use of costumes based on Chinese theatrical dress, the set design depicting a Chinese theatre rather than a specific locale, the use of "water sleeves" and traditional props, and the moderate stylization of the acting all contributed to making this production different from most other pseudo-Chinese plays. However, the play was unavoidably a synthesis of oriental and occidental. A "Chinese" play for American children could not be otherwise. Enjoyment and understanding

by the audience must be the first consideration, and the director kept this fact in mind at all times. It was not necessary for every detail to be understood--some details were for effect only, such as the tripod incense burner in the palace scenes. But much information about the Chinese classical theatre was imparted to the children while they were being entertained, and this type of education is an important part of children's theatre.

A study guide explaining the play and its conventions, and giving suggestions for classroom activities, was sent to all teachers with organized classes attending the performances. The children whose teachers used this guide undoubtedly had a clearer understanding of the play than those who came without preparation. However, The Land of the Dragon could be enjoyed on many levels, and was accepted well by those children who knew nothing about Chinese theatre. The director was pleased to hear from several teachers that the study guide had proved helpful.

The Land of the Dragon was written in the 1940's when the style of writing in children's plays was much more extended and repetitious than it is today. Madge Miller believed that it was necessary to repeat important facts at least three times in order to be sure the young audience would remember them. The director cut much of this repetitious dialogue, and also many long passages of superfluous banter, particularly that of the three Cousins. Long speeches were also shortened by cutting within the individual speeches. This tightened the script considerably, and removed many passages which provided little or no motivation for movement.

However, the play was still too long (one hour and twenty minutes), and could have benefited by additional cutting in strategic places. The director realized this fact during performances, when she made a survey of audience attention and noted repeated lessening of interest at the same spots in most performances. One particularly restless spot occurred during Act I, Scene 7, when the Cousins were grouped downstage right and Covet Spring and Precious Harp were downstage left. Each group was conspiring to produce a fake dragon, freezing as the other talked. Although much of this scene was cut originally, it was still too long. The idea of freezing behind fans proved effective, but, as played, the scene lacked excitement.

Another scene that could have benefited by cutting was between Precious Harp and Covet Spring at the beginning of Act II, when the aunt appeared in her dragon costume for the first time. This particular scene involved only two people for too long, and the dragon costume did not appeal to the children and hold their interest as expected. Also, the costume greatly hampered the movement of the actress, and she was not able to perform as planned. The result was a rather low-key scene instead of the lively scene that had been rehearsed. The dragon costume was not available until a few days before performance, and at that time extensive changes were not deemed advisable.

Act I, Scene 2, between Road Wanderer and Twenty-Fourth Cousin, also needed some cutting, especially Road Wanderer's dialogue telling of the bird and the imprisoned princess. Here again there was too much explanation with too little action, but information vital to understanding the plot was contained in those lines.

Other places evoked moderate restlessness at some performances: at the end of Act I, Scene 1, when the Cousins decided to contact their farmer brother; and the scene behind the palace wall and immediately afterward. However, both scenes provided necessary information.

The Land of the Dragon was a very difficult play to cut, other than in such obvious places as repetitious dialogue. The playwright cleverly interwove essential information throughout the play, and the director found it virtually impossible to cut more during the planning stage. In performance, areas that should have been cut became more obvious.

Three scenes in The Land of the Dragon were written with offstage voices as the center of interest and with the actors on stage merely listening and replying. These scenes were Act I, Scene 5; and Act II, Scenes 2 and 3. The director felt that the attention of the child audience would not be held by action taking place offstage, and so added the character of a guard, doubling as the city official. Thus, Act I, Scene 5, was centered about the entrance of a new character, the city official, and the visual reading of the royal proclamation proved much more effective than an offstage voice could possibly have been. The same proved true in the palace wall and dungeon scenes, when the guard appeared in person, rather than answering from offstage.

The presentational style of production discussed in Chapter I of this thesis was achieved in performance largely as planned. The director felt that the imposition of Chinese classical theatre elements on an American-written play was not incongruous, because the playwright apparently had Peking Opera in mind while writing The Land of the Dragon.

Many suggestions for staging noted in the script were traditional, and the addition of other elements enhanced the production. Care was taken not to overload the play with extraneous material, and, to that end, only such devices which were in keeping with the simplified staging were used. For example, the planned use of traditional hand movements was eliminated, and only the sleeve movements used. It was felt by the director that the desired effect was attained by the judicious use of sleeve movements, and the addition of hand movements would only serve to clutter the action.

The characterizations of the actors in The Land of the Dragon were effective within the stereotyped characters and situations provided by the playwright. The writer's emphasis was on story, and the characters were generally motivated by the situations in which they found themselves rather than by their inner feelings. The lyrical "oriental" dialogue contributed to the difficulty, although the actors generally handled it well, and such dialogue was necessary for this particular play.

The desired intimacy between the actors and the audience was successfully achieved by bringing most of the action onto the forestage. However, the director did not intend this production to be a participation play, and direct contact between actors and audience was limited to those places in the script which called for it: the Stage Manager's speeches, some of the antics of the Property Man, and the direct speeches of other actors such as Jade Pure and Twenty-Fourth Cousin.

The overall mood of fantasy in an oriental setting was achieved by working with the actors to maintain a light and flowing quality in their acting. The designer created a somewhat unrealistic fairy tale

effect of slightly bluish lighting by the use of special lavender and dark blue gels.

The director was fortunate in finding suitable authentic Chinese music, which contributed greatly to setting the mood of the play, and helped establish continuity during scene changes. The music used was a recording from the Nonesuch Explorer Series, H-72051, China-Shantung Folk Music and Traditional Instrumental Pieces, by the Lu Sheng Ensemble. The bands selected were from authentic Peking Opera music and folk tunes.

Several of the scenes in Act I needed more variation in tempo and rhythm; the overall rhythm of the act tended to be too much on one level. Certain scenes, however, such as Scenes 4 and 5, built to natural climaxes and did not have this problem: Scene 4 ended with the ringing of the city bells in alarm, and Scene 5 with the angry exit of Road Wanderer. Act II, with more action, and the introduction of two additional dragons, achieved satisfactory tempo and rhythm.

One of the problems in directing a multi-scene show such as The Land of the Dragon was maintaining a continuity of rhythm and pace through the various scene changes. During rehearsal it was found that a drop in energy level occurred when these changes were done according to the script, with a sleepy Property Man moving rather slowly through the business. To alleviate this condition, the director instructed the Stage Manager to increase his rate of speaking and to time his entrances for the earliest possible appropriate moment after the exit of the actors in the previous scene. The characterization of the Property Man was changed somewhat in order to hold the interest of the child audience through these breaks in the action. The Property Man was directed to

continue the sleepy and bored characterization wherever it contributed to the play, but to handle the scene changes with alacrity, incorporating enough mime to keep the children interested. It was discovered during the final week of rehearsal that the bench used in many scenes was too heavy to be carried by the Property Man as planned, and it had to be dragged into position. The table, also, proved to be much heavier than had been expected, and was very difficult for the Property Man to move. This was covered by elaborating on the mime done by the Property Man as the table was dragged. Judging by the enthusiastic response the Property Man received during the scene changes, especially from the morning audiences, the level of interest was successfully maintained between scenes.

Evaluation of Actor-Director Relationships

The director was extremely fortunate to have an excellent cast for The Land of the Dragon. Without exception, they were totally cooperative, conscientious, and capable. There were no personality clashes or discipline problems, and a very fine ensemble developed. Esprit de corps remained high throughout the rehearsals and performances, and the director felt that the actors were enjoying working on the play.

The director believed that a feeling of firm control must be established at the very first rehearsal, if a successful, efficient working period was to follow. To this end she announced some guidelines at the first rehearsal: that all rehearsals would begin promptly at seven thirty and usually end by ten, that all deadlines for learning lines would be enforced, that no actor should ask to be excused from a rehearsal, that all actors were expected to behave professionally.

Thus, the actors knew what to expect from the director, and what the director expected from them. This firm attitude was rewarded by having an extremely diligent cast and one hundred per cent attendance at every rehearsal. The actors and the director were able to utilize rehearsal time to the best advantage and with a minimum of frustration. The director intended to instill a sense of responsibility in the cast, and they responded well.

The deadline for memorizing Act II was enforced rather uncomfortably for one actor. Although he had made an effort to learn his lines, in rehearsal memory failed. The director would not allow a book to be used, and the actor was prompted on almost every line. In the case of this particular actor, a very conscientious young man, the director felt the best way to handle the situation was to say very little. His embarrassment was so great that the director was certain he would appear at the next rehearsal almost letter-perfect. He did, and with profuse apologies for not knowing the lines by the deadline.

In another situation an actor playing a minor part completely forgot an entrance. Since the rehearsal was a run-through, and the actors had been instructed to cover mistakes, those on stage covered successfully. During the note session afterwards, the director observed a totally dejected expression on the actor's face as he sat waiting to be reprimanded. She decided he was being punished enough without being embarrassed in front of the cast, and so did not mention the incident. Afterwards, the actor came to the director and apologized. He, too, was a conscientious young man, not accustomed to causing difficulty.

At the beginning of rehearsals the actor playing Road Wanderer was very stiff and not at all in command of his role as the hero. The director urged him to gesture and use his body more freely, and to be louder and more energetic vocally. Through praise and encouragement when he managed to achieve the right level in a specific scene, the actor was gradually able to improve until he gave a very satisfactory performance.

The director felt that originality and creativity on the part of the actors could be fostered only in a rehearsal atmosphere of enthusiasm and enjoyment. In this regard, the director held the key to setting the mood. She made every effort to convey her enthusiasm for the play to the actors, and her belief that rehearsals should be enjoyable, even though hard work.

The director explained to the actors that, although the show was pre-blocked, this blocking was to be treated as a skeleton to be fleshed out, and that the actors were encouraged to contribute ideas. For the most part, the pre-blocking worked satisfactorily, with some modifications and amplifications. The original stiffness of the actors in movement loosened into a comfortable freedom, within restraints, as they became more familiar with lines and business.

The actors were encouraged to be original and creative in their characterizations, and to develop distinctive personalities, voices, and walks. The characterizations were discussed in rehearsal, and many of the actors contributed greatly. One characterization that developed far beyond the director's expectations was that of Twenty-Fourth Cousin. This had not seemed a particularly interesting character, but the actor developed the role into delightful comedy.

A very important preparation for The Land of the Dragon was concerned with learning about Chinese classical theatre. The director believed that the actors could not understand her concept of the play and deliver the correct interpretation without a knowledge of the history and conventions of the Chinese classical theatre. This preparation began at the first rehearsal when the director explained what she was trying to achieve with the play and told a brief history of the Chinese classical theatre. The costume sketches were shown, and their relationship to the classical designs was discussed. Throughout the rehearsal period the director brought various items to stimulate interest, such as books of Peking Opera scripts, from which the director urged each cast member to read at least one play. Another book, Chinese Theatre by Sís and Vaniš Kalvodová (London: Spring House, 1957), which contained many color photographs of Peking Operas, proved exceptionally helpful in allowing the cast to see authentic costumes and makeup. A paper explaining various positions of the "water sleeves" was given to each cast member, not only the ones who would be using the sleeves, so that everyone could understand the significance. The cast was urged to attend a performance of the Chinese Acrobats of Taiwan, who happened to be appearing in town during the rehearsal period. That was another traditional form of Chinese theatre, and many of them did attend. The cast was very responsive to these efforts, and one cast member remarked that she had "learned so much working on this play."

The director's efforts to challenge the actors proved successful, and she noticed no lagging of interest in the play. In addition to the usual challenges of mastering lines, movement, interpretation, and

characterization, The Land of the Dragon provided the actors with several new challenges, such as becoming accustomed to the nearly bare stage and Chinese properties, enlarging gestures and body movements for a child audience, the use of fans and "water sleeves," and the challenge of the child audience itself--unpredictable and delightful. These elements were introduced to the actors at intervals, so that something new was presented as each level was achieved. For example, although various points were mentioned earlier, the full discussion of what to expect from a child audience was left until the last week, so that it would be fresh in the actors' minds.

During the run of the play the performances of the actors varied little. At the opening performance a slight tenseness and slowness in picking up cues was perceived by the director. This was attributable to nervousness on the part of the actors, and did not appear in the second performance that day, when the actors were much more relaxed. Apparently, the tenseness was not observed by the audience, which was enthusiastic. By mid-week the cast had attained the highest level of achievement and maintained that level throughout the run, although some fatigue was apparent to the director on the second Sunday afternoon.

Evaluation of Audience Reaction

Audience reaction to The Land of the Dragon was generally excellent. Except for the aforementioned scenes which needed additional cutting, the play held the attention of the audience. The director observed and noted reactions at all twelve performances, and despite the disparate age levels, the play was well received by the children. The morning audiences, composed almost exclusively of school children based

to the theatre, were much more responsive outwardly than those in the afternoons, when more adults were present. But the director observed attention and enjoyment during the afternoons, and, after each performance, many parents commented on how much they and their children had enjoyed the play. Jerry Kenion, reviewing the play in the Greensboro Daily News, stated, "The Land of the Dragon . . . is a rich feast for the eyes and a well-directed feather to the funnybone."¹

The director tape-recorded an informal survey after several of the afternoon performances, in order to gauge audience reaction. One question was asked, mostly of children in the seven to eleven age group: "What did you like best about the play?" This age group was chosen because the play was written primarily for that level and also because children of that age were not afraid to talk into a microphone. As expected, the survey showed that Small One, the dragon, was the overwhelming favorite, with sixty-one children naming him. Variations on the usual answer of "the dragon," were "when the dragon went flying up in the air," "when the dragon breathed smoke," "when the dragon said 'Road Wanderer,'" and "all the dragons."

Also extremely popular were Jade Pure, Road Wanderer, and the Property Man. Eleven children said they liked best, "when they got married," and seventeen "liked it all." One boy liked "when the man was getting his head chopped off," and a girl liked "when the sisters said, 'You're ugly.' That's funny!" Several very discerning children liked "the characters," "the people," and "the costumes."

¹ Jerry Kenion, "'Land of the Dragon' Will Tickle Funnybone," Greensboro Daily News, 30 October 1975, sec. E, p. 3.

A member of the cast remarked to the director that the actors felt the Thursday morning audience to be the most responsive. Unknown to the actors, this audience was primarily the seven to eleven age group. This supports the theory that separating audiences according to age and providing different plays for each level is the best approach to children's theatre. It is indeed unfortunate that most companies cannot do this.

The Land of the Dragon received the audience response aimed for, with the more active and visual scenes causing the most vocal response. Such scenes as the colliding of the dragons, the abusing of Twenty-Fourth Cousin by his sisters, the horse riding scene, and all the scenes containing Small One were especially well received. The Property Man's antics were greeted with gales of laughter at every morning performance, with the children obviously anticipating the activities between scenes. At the afternoon performances response was less, but, judging by comments after each show, the Property Man was considered a delightful part of the play.

Several interesting responses occurred during the play. In Act I, Scene 2, Twenty-Fourth Cousin pointed over the heads of the audience saying, "There my friend goes, on the dragon's back!" Most of the children turned to look. The same reaction occurred later when Precious Harp and Covet Spring supposedly saw the dragon flying. In Act I, Scene 5, Jade Pure addressed the audience saying, "Bow before your princess!" Many children bowed in their seats, especially those toward the front of the house. At other times there were "mice" squeaking in the audience, and "birds" twittering. These were positive responses, and indicated attention.

Personal Observations

The Land of the Dragon presented a challenge and an opportunity to the director: the challenge of directing a difficult play, and the opportunity of presenting a superior production. A worthwhile play, an excellent and cooperative cast, a talented and creative designer, and good facilities, all combined to make this production a memorable one for the director. Problems were minimal, and cooperation on all sides was excellent. The director was able to devote sufficient time to each successive phase of rehearsal--a luxury seldom found in the theatre. The final production, though not without faults, achieved a level of artistic success and audience response that was extremely gratifying to the director.

The director firmly believes that theatre for children should look upward and forward, frequently expanding the child's horizon beyond the familiar fairy and folk tales. Norman Nadel states this premise well:

It is a grievous mistake, for example, to limit the play to what a child knows--has experienced so far. If all childhood experience were limited to what was already familiar, he'd never learn. Life would be static . . . Let the play have a point of reference to his own experience--or several such--but let it progress from there to something new. Give the child something to discover.²

The Land of the Dragon did give the children something to discover--the fascinating world of the Chinese theatre. Hopefully, a new dimension was added to their knowledge.

²Orlin Corey, Theatre for Children--Kid Stuff, or Theatre? (Anchorage, Ky.: Anchorage Press, 1974), p. 19.

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- Scott, A. C., ed. Traditional Chinese Plays. 2 vols. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967-69.
- Zung, Cecilia S. L. Secrets of the Chinese Drama. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964.

APPENDIX A

TYP STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

The Land of the Dragon, written by the well-known children's playwright Madge Miller, is a fairy tale combining a delightful story with the unique artistry of the Chinese stage. While not an authentic Chinese tale, the play captures the flavor of the Chinese theatre in its script and presentation.

Chinese classical theatre is thousands of years old, and through the ages many traditions have evolved--traditions of characterization, costuming, makeup, stage design, movement, and stage properties. For example, certain characters always wear specific costumes, no matter which play they are currently performing. The costume suits the character and is not designed for a specific play, as in western theatre. The Chinese classical stage consisted of a bare platform with an embroidered curtain, frequently an embroidered dragon, on the back wall with doors on either side of the curtain. Few stage properties were used, and the furniture consisted of a table and two chairs, which represented various things such as a mountain or tower, as well as being used as table and chairs.

Chinese classical theatre is very different from Chinese everyday life, and this fact must be absolutely clear to the children. This theatre does not represent realism in the way American theatre often does. It is very stylized and usually is concerned with legends and folk tales.

The teacher is urged to give the children some background in the style of Chinese classical theatre, so that they will be prepared for the nearly bare stage and pantomime used in The Land of the Dragon. Two short books which could be of great help to the teacher in this respect are An Introduction to Chinese Theatre by A. C. Scott (Theatre Arts Books, 1959), and Chinese Theatre by Sís and Vaniš Kalvodová (Spring House, 1957). The latter book has excellent color photos showing costumes and makeup.

It should also be of interest to the children to understand that Chinese classical theatre (often termed Peking Opera in more recent times), while still performed, is only one of several types of plays done in modern China. Western-style plays are now done, and the Communists use the theatre frequently to present their ideology to the people through drama.

The director and the designer of The Land of the Dragon have adapted the stylization and conventions of the Chinese classical theatre to fit the limitations of a play for American children. The costumes the children will see are derived from authentic Chinese theatrical designs; the set is also an adaptation of the authentic classical stage. Many of the stage properties used are styled after authentic classical props: such as the whips used when "riding" horseback, the decorative table, the beheading sword, the imitation tree, and the city wall. The use of a Property Man dressed in black to change props in full view of the audience is also traditional. It is the intention of the Theatre for Young People to give the child audience an experience in oriental theatre, presented as authentically as possible at the child's level of understanding.

The Characters and the Play

The Land of the Dragon has a lovable "real live" dragon on stage capering about. The children are sure to enjoy him, and also the two fake dragons who conspire to steal the throne. The story tells of the lovely Princess Jade Pure, who is about to become Empress of the Southern Kingdom--if only she marries before her eighteenth birthday. Her wicked aunt, Precious Harp, who wants the throne for herself, has kept Jade Pure almost a prisoner. She has told everyone that the princess is ugly, so no one wishes to marry her. Fortunately, the princess meets Road Wanderer, a student with a pet dragon named Small One, and they fall in love. But they become separated. Meanwhile, the wicked aunt and the chancellor, Covet Spring, are conspiring to steal the throne, and three cousins of the princess also are conspiring to the same end. Road Wanderer is saved from execution in the nick of time, and all ends happily.

Why Should Children Attend "The Land of the Dragon"?

The purpose of children's theatre is to provide dramatic productions for the child audience which will help the children in several ways:

1. Give the children the joy of watching a story come alive.
2. Develop standards of taste.
3. Develop appreciation of the art of theatre.
4. Encourage raising standards for their own creative dramatic experience.
5. Intensify understanding of life values by relating human experiences seen on stage to their own.

The experience of attending The Land of the Dragon can be much richer, more meaningful, and more long-lasting for the children if attendance is prefaced by innovative activities related to the story, characters, and meaning of the play. The suggested activities which

follow should be of help to each teacher in planning and executing worthwhile classroom activities for use before the play and particularly to use in enlarging and enriching the child's experience after the play.

Some Things the Children Should Look for When They See the Play

1. Whips used to represent horses. In the Chinese classical theatre riding horseback is indicated by an actor galloping with a whip in his hand.
2. Use of the "water sleeves." These are extensions to the sleeves on some costumes, and are used by the actor to indicate such actions as weeping (the corner of the sleeve is brought to the actor's eye), and speaking an aside (the sleeve droops over the raised hand, concealing it).
3. The Property Man, who changes props and furniture. He forms a tree by holding up a branch, and makes a city wall by holding up a piece of painted cloth (the wall is traditional).
4. A pool of water is represented by a traditional blue cloth.
5. Jade Pure stands on a table, representing a tower.
6. Traditional makeup: white and pink makeup on the women; a white patch, signifying a comic character, on the face of Covet Spring; and a fake beard hung from the ears of the Stage Manager.
7. Authentic Chinese music.

Language Arts and Creative Writing

Before the Play

Read to the class some Chinese fairy tales. These create a similar story atmosphere to that of The Land of the Dragon, with their fanciful approach. Hearing Chinese fairy tales is a much better preparation for seeing this play than reading books about life in China. Some excellent books of fairy tales are:

Bonnet, Leslie. Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963. This book includes the famous stories The White Snake Lady and The Red-Maned Steed.

Carpenter, Frances. Tales of a Chinese Grandmother. Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1945.

Lum, Peter. Fairy Tales of China. Dutton, 1959.

Also interesting: Chinese Mother Goose Rhymes, edited by Robert Wyndham (World Publishing Co., 1968).

Teach the children how to write some Chinese words. An excellent, simple book for this is You Can Write Chinese by Kurt Wiese (Viking, 1945).

Tell the children something about the history of Chinese theatre-- its staging, conventions, costumes, makeup, and types of actors.

After the Play

Ask the children to write a fairy tale in the manner of Chinese fairy tales.

Ask the children to write stories based on earlier adventures of Road Wanderer and his dragon, Small One.

Have the class tell aloud an open-ended story about Road Wanderer and Small One, or the three Cousins.

Art

Before the Play

Have the class look at pictures of Chinese paintings and discuss how the style differs from American painting.

Have the class look at pictures of Ming vases and statues, and discuss them.

Show the class pictures of Chinese New Year celebrations with the various stylized dragons, kites, and dances. Have a New Year celebration in the class with appropriate dragons, etc.

After the Play

Have the children make Chinese fans or screens and decorate them with Chinese designs.

Have the children paint pictures in Chinese style.

Encourage the children to draw their favorite scenes from the play.

Show the children how to make Chinese shadow puppets (simplified) and put on a puppet show of a Chinese fairy tale. Two excellent sources on making Chinese shadow puppets are Chinese Shadow-figure Plays and Their Making by Benjamin March (Puppetry Imprints, 1938), and Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films by Lotte Reiniger (B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1970).

Music and Creative Dramatics

Before the Play

Play a record of authentic Chinese music for the children and discuss the different Chinese instruments used and the unusual tonalities. Show them pictures of these instruments. The children will hear authentic Chinese folk songs and Peking Opera songs played during The Land of the Dragon.

After the Play

Have the children act out their favorite scenes from the play.
Encourage them to develop new story ideas with the characters from the play.

Social Studies

Attendance at The Land of the Dragon can be the starting point for a study of Chinese life, both before and after the advent of Communism. Some topics for investigation are:

1. The everyday life of rural Chinese people before Communism, and the changes that have occurred since. The life of urban people before and after.
2. The Chinese schools, before and after the Communist takeover.
3. Changes in the Chinese theatre since the Communist takeover.
4. Old customs of family life.

Recommended Books

The following are interesting books on Chinese life (not Chinese theatre:

Younger Children (Ages 5-8)

- Ayer, Jacqueline. Little Silk. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970.
Chih-Yi and Chan, Plato. The Good-Luck Horse. McGraw Hill, 1943.
Handforth, Thomas. Mei Li. Caldecott Medal winner. Doubleday, 1938.
Lattimore, Frances. Little Pear. Harcourt, Brace, 1931.
Wiese, Kurt. Fish in the Air. Viking, 1948.

Older Children (Ages 9-12)

- DeJong, Meindert. The House of Sixty Fathers. Harper & Row, 1956.
Larson, Jean. The Silkspinners. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.
Lattimore, Eleanor. Bells for a Chinese Donkey. William Morrow, 1951.
Lewis, Elizabeth. Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze. Newbery Medal winner. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1932. A sound filmstrip of this book is also available: Miller-Brody, 1972.
2 FS. col. 1 tape cassette.

APPENDIX B
TRADITIONAL SLEEVE MOVEMENTS
IN THE CHINESE THEATRE

Long sleeves were introduced in order to give more grace to the body movements. In the later dynasties, however, it was felt that these sleeves were too heavy for quick motions. Therefore, for the sake of lightness as well as cleanliness, cuffs, from one and one-half to two feet long and made of sheer silk, usually white in color, were attached to the sleeves, and left open at the seam. This extension of the sleeve, when flourished, looked like flowing water, hence the term "rippling water sleeve." Sleeve movement was very carefully studied and taught, as grace was imperiously demanded of both male and female characters.

The Aside Sleeve

Raise the right hand to the right side, level with the cheeks. Let the sleeve hang down naturally from the fingers. Sometimes the actor walks a few steps to the side of the stage away from the other players.

The Greeting Sleeves

Place the left hand below the chest on the right side of the waist, and put the right hand on it. At the same time, make a graceful bow. Meaning is to show respect to the person greeted.

The Sending-away Sleeve

In a curved movement raise the hand to the front, slightly below the face, palm inward. Then, by a circular wrist movement, throw the sleeve forcefully outward from the body, either once or three times, using both hands alternately. In the latter case the actor steps backward in harmony with the hand movements.

The Weeping Sleeve

Hold the upper corner of the left sleeve with the right hand (bare), and raise to the eyes, just near enough to seem that the actor is wiping away his tears with the sleeve.

The Running Sleeves

Throw the sleeves upward and let them hang slanting on the outer side of the wrists. Then immediately stretch out both arms level with the shoulders. The actor is not permitted to run straight forward, but rather sidewise, so in running to the right front, he first turns a little towards the left, though his torso and face should be kept towards the right. The right hand is raised a little higher than the head, as if leading towards the front. Then, with small mincing steps, he runs gracefully in curves and finally exits. If the destination is in the opposite direction, the actor performs the same movement but in the opposite direction.

The Resting Sleeves

Unless the actor plays the role of a ghost, or wishes to show that he is in a very awkward position, he is forbidden to drop the hands to the sides of the body because this would be displeasing to the eye. Therefore, if one hand, for instance the right, is down a little to the left, the other should be placed on the right arm a little below the elbow.

The Repulsing Sleeve

After a circular wrist movement, throw the sleeve abruptly towards the person disliked. At the same time cast an angry look at him, and then turn the head in the opposite direction to show that no further communication is desired.

Source: Secrets of the Chinese Drama by Cecilia S. L. Zung (Benjamin Blom, 1964).

APPENDIX C

PROGRAM

THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

By
MADGE MILLER

PRESENTED BY THE THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Department of Drama and Speech
College of Arts and Sciences
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Directed by Doreen Heard
Costumes, Scenery, and Lighting Designed by Joseph Conger

CAST
(in order of their appearance)

The Stage Manager	Tony Clay
The Property Man	Kathy Romano
Jade Pure, princess of the Southern Kingdom	Christine Morris
Twenty-First Cousin, maid of Jade Pure	Teresa Keller
Twenty-Second Cousin, maid of Jade Pure	Becky Mitchell
Twenty-Third Cousin, maid of Jade Pure	Emili Green
Precious Harp, aunt to Jade Pure	Judith Sapp
Civet Spring, chancellor	Ludford Etheridge, Jr.
Twenty-Fourth Cousin, a farmer	Roger Jackson
Road Wanderer, a student	Dwight Watson
Small One, a dragon	Robert Prichard
A Guard	Steve Martin

TIME: Long, long ago. PLACE: China, The Land of the Dragon
PLEASE REMAIN SEATED AS THERE WILL BE NO INTERMISSION

Assistant Director	Nancy Watkins
Costume Supervisor	Zoe Brown
Director, THE THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	Tom Behm

The Land of the Dragon is produced through arrangement with Anchorage Press

PROGRAM NOTE

Chinese classical theatre is many thousands of years old, and through the ages countless traditions have evolved in costume, properties, acting, and makeup. It is the intention of the director and designer of *The Land of the Dragon* to give the child audience an experience in oriental theatre, adapted to their level of understanding. In the play the costumes, props, makeup, and many other details are derived from authentic Chinese theatre sources. *The Land of the Dragon* provides a lively glimpse of Chinese-style theatre.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager	Victoria Pidgeon
Technical Director	Dennis Maulden
Master Carpenter	Ed Simpson
Scenery Crew	David Ramsey (Head), Nately Donnell, Ty Faust, Ann Mintz, Robin Robertson, Buddy Baker, Sandy O'Connor, O'Chair Alexander, Richard Hamby
Properties	Susan E. Mickey (Head), Sara Stuart, Suzanne LaVande, Jeanne Howie, Walter Moore, Tui King, Don McIntosh
Lighting Crew	Gary Weatherly and Bonnie Becker, (Co-Heads), Bill Andrews, Rebecca Meluch, Susie Beam, Judy Hall, Emily Butler, Lora Lynn Johns
Costume Crew	Kaye Brown (Supervisor), Sylvia Williams, Leigh Mazursky, Sue Giziński, David Turner, Teresa Jenkins, David Fitzsimmons, Elizabeth Rice, Sharon Ford, Grace Hill, Joyce Kernodie, Cathy Rector, Gray Childress
Makeup Crew	Wendy Willson (Head), Gayle Piskin, Brad Packard
Millinery Crew	Sara Ross Morgan (Head), Marsha Bright, Martha Mitchell, Laura Wade, Luke Neal, Bonnie Pollace, Mary Ann Fallon, Debbie Michaels
Accessories	Karen Thompson (Head), Roxanne Harrell, Cindy Jones, Coy Covington, Linda Forrest, David Ledbetter, Mike Allen, Carver Rapp, Annette Sydes
Dragon Construction Crew	Small One—Collin Thompson Dragons #2 and #3—Jim Coble (Head), Joyce Allen, Bill Andrews, Jane D'Auversy, Jean Jones, Lisa Nieman, Phil Pfaff, Stacy Ray, Wendy Willson
Sound Crew	Dorian Harold (Head), Don H. Pickett
Program Design	Dennis Maulden

Aims of The Theatre for Young People

To teach values, principles, ideas and ideals.	To set a high standard of entertainment for children.
To broaden intracultural understanding and citizenship.	To stimulate creative imagination and ability.
To develop interest in and appreciation of the arts.	To set high standards of good speech and diction.